

OUTWITTED.

BY ADA F. STRICKLAND.

"I won't," I said briefly but emphatically. "I'll run away first." And I looked fiercely at my aunt, a mild little woman in a drab silk dress and gold eye-glasses, who would have loved me if I had let her.

"Catherine, my dear," she began.

"Don't 'dear' me, Aunt Clara," I said impatiently. "I am dear to no one. If I was, why should you all be so anxious to get rid of me? I have heard nothing, for a year, but this grand match and that one that I must make. I don't want to make any matches, and I won't try to please Mr. Murray or any other man you may bring here to look at me, and appraise me," and I walked away very majestically, as I fondly imagined, out of the room. But as I was very small of stature, I expect my efforts to be majestic were a failure. I was thoroughly angry, and just a little heart-sore, as I went to my room. Why was it everybody wanted me to get married? I had n't heard anything else since I put on my first long dress. I knew that my uncle held in trust for me a goodly sum; enough

to keep me in ease all the days of my life. I wished sometimes there was none of it, that I might be independent, and earn my own living comfortably, and never think of a man from morning until night. Horrid creatures! I could imagine how this Mr. Murray looked. Just as all the men looked whom Aunt Clara brought to my notice. A little man — I hate little men — with hay-colored hair, parted in the middle, and a mustache! I hate a mustache. And he was to be here for supper, and I must try to please him, Auntie said. I'd not! I'd try to displease him, I thought. And, with the thought, there came to me a plan of action. Springing to my feet, I surveyed myself critically in the mirror. There is a class of girls, you know, dear reader, who can make themselves either pretty, or ugly, at their own desire, and I was one of them. I knew that when I crimped and curled my dark hair, and put cunning little bows of ribbon just where they would "do the most good," to use one of Fred's political slang phrases, when I wore crimson or pink, or black

brightened with these colors, that I was just about as pretty a girl as our set could produce. I knew, also, that I could comb my hair straight back behind my ears, and pin it up in a tight knot; I could leave off the bows, the ear-rings, and the pretty laces; I could wear a horrible blue dress Aunt Clara had bought for me, — poor soul! she did n't know the difference, — and straightway I was extremely homely. I could n't make my eyes any smaller, and I could n't change my complexion very much; but, nevertheless, I could make quite a different girl of myself when I chose. And I chose now to "displease" Mr. Murray, of whom I had heard so much. So I dressed myself in warlike array, and waited for the supper bell. I heard the bustle of arrival downstairs, heard uncle's loud, cheery voice inquire for "Kitty." He knows I detest being called Kitty. Then I heard Fred take the new arrival to his room, which was next to my own; heard snatches of conversation, in which "my cousin Kate" figured largely on Fred's side. But still I did not go down until the second chiming of the call-bell.

Then I took one hasty, farewell glance at myself. Shades of the departed! Could that be Catherine Elliston, the belle of her native village; that creature with the dull brown complexion, the straight black hair done up in an uncompromising pug-knot? The blue dress was without even a ruffle or lace to redeem its plainness. I took a sort of savage delight in my own ugliness. No danger of Mr. Murray being pleased with such an apparition as that, thought I, and I took up my march with solemn dignity toward the dining-room. I had a fancy that all men hated literary women, I suppose because I was so un-literary myself; so I picked up a book as I went. I heard a low whistle from Fred as I entered, which gave a suspicious quaver to my voice, as I went on reading. I was brought to a full stop, at my seat, by my uncle's premonitory "ahem!" before he said, "My niece, Miss Elliston, Mr. Murray."

I gave the stranger the benefit of a broad stare, and placed my book on the window-seat. Over the blessing, I gave Mr. Murray another glance. He was not one of aunty's "good, nice young men." I saw that in a moment. His hair was anything but "bay-colored," being darker than my own; and no mustache or beard was on his face.

Shall I confess, that, with the first glance, I wished I had not put on that odious blue dress? But I was not a girl to turn back; and, being determined to carry out my part, I sat throughout the meal in stony silence, varied now and then by a lugubrious sigh.

More than ever did I wish I had not attempted this game when we had adjourned to the parlor, and Anna Melville and her brother came in to spend the evening. Anna had always been one of my rivals, since we used to go sliding down hill, and she always got the sled I wanted. She was arrayed in her best this evening, and really looked charming with her golden-brown hair arranged in the latest style of puffs and braids and crimps. How was Mr. Murray to know that half of it was false! and she had on a charming little blue jacket trimmed with swansdown. I thought with a little sigh of the pink one up-stairs in my trunk. Very much surprised was I to see Mr. Murray, forsaking this beaming creature, come straightway to my forlorn presence, and strive to enter into conversation. But there was no conversation in me this evening. Monosyllables were the most that could be obtained. He discoursed of the weather.

"Yes," I said: "it is delightful."

"W—— is a pleasant village," he said.

"No," I said a little viciously; "I don't think it is."

"Your friend, Miss Melville," he said, "is certainly a very pretty young lady."

"Yes, she is pretty; but, for my part, I prefer a simpler style of dressing."

He saw that I did, with a glance at my "top-knot," as Fred calls it, that almost threw me into convulsions.

He was glad to find one young lady who preferred the classical style of hair-dressing. Here I began to have a vague idea that he was quizzing me, and was glad when Fred came along and carried him off to the piano. It seems he is quite a musician.

Fred came back to me.

"For Heaven's sake, Kate, why have you made such a guy of yourself?" he asked. "Do go and take off that blue thing, and fix up your hair. Murray" —

Here I stopped him.

"I suppose I have a right to look ugly if I want to, Fred Elliston," I said. "It won't do to be so much better looking than the rest of the family."

I was sorry the minute I said it, for I saw

by his look he meant to have revenge. But he went away.

Mr. Murray played and sang "The Land o' the Leal" so well, that I, who love music passionately, could not help admiring it. Then Anna sang her little songs. She only knows two, — "The Gypsy's Warning," and "Beware, oh! Beware." Then Mr. Murray came for me to go to the piano. If there is anything I can do well, it is music; but I jumbled several pieces together this evening, made a great discord, and closed by telling him I had something of more importance to attend to than practicing. I was certain he thought then I was a woman's-rights woman.

When Anna said she must go home, I did not urge her to stay; and so the evening ended.

When I stood before the mirror, and looked myself over, I did n't feel quite so well satisfied as I did several hours before. What was the use of anybody making herself so hideous? But then, what would he think of me now, if I dawning on him in all the glory of my usual style of dress and appearance? No: I was in for it now. I had set out to make the gentleman dislike me, and I would do it. Then the idea struck me, that perhaps he would n't have liked me any way, and I was putting myself to all this trouble for nothing. He was n't one of Aunt Clara's wishywaschy young men, who felt bound to fall in love with me at first sight, and propose on the third day. This view of the case made me feel rather uncomfortable; but I dismissed it, and went to my virtuous slumbers resolved to conquer though I die.

The next morning I donned the oldest, ugliest wrapper I possessed, and left my hair a little rougher than the night before; but, in spite of my looks, Mr. Murray was very attentive. Was I actually pleasing him when I was trying to do just the opposite? Too late now to stop to ask questions. "Mine not to reason why." I must go forward in the path I had chosen.

Thus the hateful week went on, and each day I tried to make myself look a little more like a witch, though I was getting heartily tired of the whole business; for, now that I knew Mr. Murray, I really desired to obtain his good opinion.

For he was not at all the style of man I had fancied him. So pleasant and polite, and showed no signs of falling in love, unless it

was with Anna Melville, who was at our house continually. Little cat! as if I did n't know she did n't love me that well.

Then came the last day. Mr. Murray was to leave on the morrow, and he and Fred had gone to the city on some business. Never had I taken such pains in beautifying myself as I did before their arrival that evening. I would show him, before he left, that I could look as well as Anna Melville dared look. She would be there, and I would eclipse her or perish in the attempt. If I had taken pleasure in my appearance on the evening of his arrival, how much more did I as I surveyed myself now! — the rich black silk, made in the height of fashion, with the sweeping trail, that with my high-heeled boots gave me seemingly several extra inches of height; the jacket of pink and swansdown matching the pink bows that nestled at my throat, and in the waves of my hair, that, released from its enforced plainness, shone with pride. There was a flush of excitement on my cheek, and my eyes were bright with the same feeling. Thus equipped, I went down to the parlor to await their arrival.

Seated there, before the mellow glow of the grate, I thought over the past week, and was almost constrained to wish I could blot it altogether out of my life. What had I accomplished by my foolishness? Nothing; only, perhaps, lost a friendship that might have been very precious to me. And, actually, there was a tear dropping down in my lap. Then I heard the sharp click of the gate, and the next moment Mr. Murray stood in the door. I arose, expecting an exclamation of surprise. But, no; he only bowed, as to a total stranger, and said politely, —

"Excuse me, miss. I was looking for Miss Kate Elliston."

"Why, Mr. Murray," I began, laughing a little nervously, "don't you know me? I am Kate."

"Excuse me again," he said. "There is some mistake. The young lady I was looking for, with all her eccentricities, was, I believe, truthful, and would not attempt to palm herself off for what she is not. I will look for her." And he was gone.

I could not help it. Tears rushed to my eyes; and, with a low cry, I sank sobbing on the sofa. Surely this was too severe a punishment for my silliness, for I saw now he had seen through it all.

Then a pair of arms lifted me up, and my head rested on scmebody's shoulder. And this somebody said, —

“Foolish little girl, not to know that I had seen and loved your picture before I ever saw you! And not to remember that

Fred and I could plot as well as you! Look up now, and tell me you forgive me, and you love me. Quick! Anna is coming!”

Well, I said it, and have never been sorry for it, though I had to confess myself outwitted.

PAIRING OFF.

Bigelow, Elizabeth

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PAIRING OFF.

BY ELIZABETH BIGELOW.

"Who is he, Molly?—the tall, handsome one, with the brown eyes, and such an elegant mustache!"

They were standing at the farm-house door, — Molly Dunning, the farmer's daughter, and her city friend, Kitty Fortescue, while the "farm-hands" were coming up from the hay-field, sun-burnt and weary with their long day's toil.

Molly hesitated before she answered, and the faint pink flush on her cheek deepened a little.

"He is one of the hands. He came about two weeks ago, and asked for work, and father hired him for the haying season."

"Dear me! is he only a haymaker!" said Miss Kitty, with a little sigh. "He looks like a gentleman. He has a really *distingue* air!"

"Don't you want to go after the horse with me? He is only down in the south pasture. I can harness him, myself, and we 'll go to drive. You would like that, would n't you?"

"No—yes," said Kitty absently. "What is his name?"

"Jerry."

"Jerry? horrors! you don't really mean it? What a dreadful name!"

"It is n't very nice," said Molly, laughing, "but Brother Bob named him, so I like it."

"Your brother Bob named him! What in the world do you mean? He must be older than Bob!"

"O dear, no! he is n't as old as he looks. To be sure almost all his teeth have dropped out, and" —

"Oh-h! his teeth almost all dropped out? he had perfectly elegant teeth! What do you mean?"

"O no, dear! you could n't have noticed; he has only one tooth on each side; and he is beginning to have the asthma a little, but I can't bear to think that the poor fellow is growing old, I do love him so dearly!"

"Molly Dunning, have you taken leave of your senses? Whom are you talking about?"

"Why, Jerry, to be sure."

"You call him Jerry, and you say you love him dearly?" cried Kitty, with a look of mingled bewilderment and horror.

"Well, why should n't I? Have n't I had him ever since he was a colt, and" —

"Oh, it's a horse you are talking about, is it?"

"Why, of course!—my nice old Jerry. What did you think I was talking about?"

"Why" — and here Miss Kitty hesitated, and blushed just a little bit, though she had been a belle in fashionable society for four seasons, and did not blush easily.

"Why, I did n't hear you say anything about a horse; we were talking about that handsome young haymaker!"

They both laughed at the ridiculous mistake, but there was a shadow on Molly's face even while she laughed. It was evident that she did not care to jest or even to talk about the handsome young haymaker. After discovering that Miss Kitty would like to go to drive she led the way down to the south pasture, without another word.

But Miss Kitty Fortescue, on the contrary, did wish to talk about the handsome young haymaker; she was so sadly at a loss for something to do, as she expressed it; "something to do" meaning, according to Miss Kitty's vocabulary, somebody to flirt with. Bloomsbury was so very dull! When the doctor had declared that she must have quiet and rest, and that a gay watering-place might be the death of her, she had accepted the invitation of her old school-mate, Molly Dunning, as the least objectionable opportunity that presented itself. Here promised to be a crumb of comfort mingled with the misery of seclusion there. For was not Molly's brother Bob just home from college? — a very handsome young man, judging from his photographs, and judging from his age very susceptible. But alas for the instability of human hopes! Bob had gone off on a European tour before she arrived, and the little village of

Bloomsbury failed to furnish a "foeman" in any way "worthy of her steel." A flirtation even of the mildest description was utterly out of the question. Miss Fortescue dropped the lid of her biggest trunk over her pretty dresses, with a sigh of despair.

She had been at Bloomsbury for a week, now, and even the faint charm of novelty which had hung about the quiet life there was beginning to wear away. It was "unendurably, inexpressibly, horribly dreary," as Miss Kitty wrote to one of her city friends. So it was scarcely to be wondered at that the young lady should be somewhat attracted toward a young man, who, if he had not been a haymaker, would have been "so interesting!" She wondered so much that she had not noticed him before; though of course she had not thought it worth the while to cast a glance upon the haymakers, and had thought New-England farm manners very ridiculous when she observed how familiarly Molly talked with them all. But it really was worth the while to talk to a young man who looked like a prince in disguise.

"What is his name? — not the horse, but the young man," she asked, as she followed Molly into the pasture.

"John Dobson," said Molly.

"O dear, how hopelessly plebeian! How can a man named John Dobson look like that? He has such an elegant gait, — so different from the others; and did you notice his hands, Molly? They are very brown, of course, but not coarse and rough as you would expect. It is really distressing that he should be only a farm laborer!"

"A man's a man for a' that," sang Molly lightly.

"Molly, I think such exceedingly democratic notions as you have are really dangerous! You'll be doing some dreadful thing, one of these days, — marrying one of these wandering haymakers, who happens to be handsome and a little bit more refined than his comrades!"

Molly colored vividly; she was an unsophisticated little country girl, and had a trick of blushing at every possible opportunity, but still she was equal to giving Miss Kitty a little thrust.

"Just at present I don't seem to be the one who is interested in the haymakers, for all my dangerous notions!"

"Pooh! Interested! One can't help no-

ticing when a man looks so very superior to his station as this John Dobson does, but I don't think there is the slightest danger of my ever becoming interested in a person of that sort!"

They had found Jerry by this time; but he was lying down, with a drooping head, and breathing with a painful effort.

"O poor old Jerry! it is that dreadful asthma again. I must not drive him, of course. I'll take Gypsy,—you are not afraid? He is pretty frisky, but I drove him once and he behaved well enough."

"Oh, no! I am not afraid," said Miss Kitty. "If a horse will only go, that is all I care for!"

"You won't have any fault to find with Gyp in that respect."

Gyp came prancing toward them, with a gay toss of his head. He was a beautiful little black horse, but with a light in his eye that betokened mischief.

"I shall have to send Tim to catch and harness him. He is a little too much for me, as yet," said Molly.

Tim, the "chore boy," showed all his teeth, in a broad grin, when told to harness Gyp, and imparted to Kitty the encouraging information that he would "go like a house afire."

But Gyp in harness looked as meek as any lamb.

The interesting young haymaker came out of the house as they got into the carriage, and Kitty heard him say something to Tim, in a tone of surprise and remonstrance.

"O laws! Miss Molly can drive him. She can drive anything on this farm, you'd better b'lieve! She's smarter than a steel trap, Miss Molly is!"

But no particular "smartness" seemed to be required to drive Gyp. He went fast enough to satisfy Kitty, and he tossed his head a little, now and then, but he seemed perfectly gentle and docile.

"How could you say he was frisky?" said Kitty, as they were driving homeward. "He is a perfect lamb!"

But just at that moment the attention of the "perfect lamb" was attracted by a white cow, standing beside a wall. It was growing dark, and the cow looked very white. Whether Gyp took it for the ghost of a cow, or whether he objected to a white cow on principle, is uncertain. At all events he reared, and kicked, and pranced, and

then suddenly continued his performance by starting off on the run.

Kitty screamed, a proceeding which inspired him to renewed efforts.

"Do keep still, Kitty! I can't hold him! He is perfectly wild! Our only chance is in keeping quiet and not frightening him any more!"

But unfortunately Kitty was not one of the sort of people who can "keep quiet" in danger. Every now and then she uttered a piercing scream, which of course excited the frightened horse. He proved himself worthy of Tim's praise,—he certainly went "like a house afire." Molly wound the reins around her wrists, but all her efforts were useless; the terrified animal was entirely beyond her control.

A little farther on there was a sharp turn in the road. Molly remembered it with a thrill of terror. There was a stone wall on each side of the road; if they were thrown out there they would be killed.

And still Kitty screamed, and Gyp rushed furiously along. But, suddenly, just as they reached the turn, a man sprang out from the roadside, directly in front of the frantic horse, and seized him, speaking to him, at the same time, in a soothing voice. The horse dragged him several yards; at every instant Molly expected to see him trampled under his feet. But the horse knew his voice. He stopped at length, quivering in every limb, but quiet.

Kitty sprang out, a little inclined to be hysterical, but graceful and airy still.

"O Mr.—Mr. Dobson! how can we ever thank you? You have saved our lives!"

But John Dobson was attending to Molly, and did not hear. Poor Molly! she had never fainted before, in her life; but the sudden re-action from despair to joy, and an intense pain in one of her wrists, of which she had just become conscious, were too much for her. John Dobson lifted the little limp figure carefully out of the carriage.

"I shall carry her up to the house; she will not be able to walk,—and you can get into the carriage, and drive Gyp; he is quiet enough now; there is not the slightest danger."

He said it very quietly, and with something of an air of command which aroused Miss Kitty's wrath.

"Upon my word! he is cool, for a servant!" she said to herself."

"I shall do nothing of the kind!" she said haughtily.

It detracted somewhat from the effect of the speech that she was obliged to scream it after him, as he was already striding rapidly toward the house with his burden.

"Very well; stay there, then, until I send some one," he replied.

Miss Kitty sat down by the roadside, overcome with astonishment. That any mortal man should dare to speak to her in that tone, and that John Dobson, a haymaker, should dare to do it, was too much for her to realize.

Perhaps it would be the more dignified way to walk quietly up to the house, and leave Gyp to his own devices, she thought. But for some unaccountable reason she did n't do it. She accepted the situation, and sat there by the roadside, in the darkness, with no companion save Gyp, who stood quietly, only turning his head to look inquiringly at her, now and then, as if he did not at all understand what they were waiting for.

Kitty wished heartily that she had not said she would not drive Gyp up to the house; she was not at all afraid of him, now, and it would have been much more agreeable than waiting here; but after that horrid John Dobson had said it in such an authoritative way of course she was not going to do it!

He came back after the horse, himself, at length. As soon as she heard his step Kitty arose and walked haughtily by him without a word.

Molly's wrist was slightly sprained, and she was still suffering pain; she was deeply impressed with the narrowness of their escape, and the bravery of John Dobson. But Kitty was much more deeply impressed with the impertinence of John Dobson. She lay awake until a late hour that night resolving to treat him with the utmost hauteur, and then laughed and was ashamed of herself for being so ridiculous as to think about a farm laborer at all; of course he did not know any better, they were allowed to be impertinent; but she would take very good care that he did not speak to her at all, again!

But Fate's way was a different one from Miss Kitty Fortescue's.

Kitty had a fancy for trying rural occupations the next morning. She was tired of reading and embroidery, and one must

do something, so she insisted upon helping Tim pick the peas for dinner. But the peapoles tore her dainty white dress, and the caterpillars crawled over her, and she very soon retired in disgust to the little arbor at the foot of the garden. It was in a retired and not very attractive place, and she had never been there before. It was covered with hop-vines, and there were probably plenty of caterpillars on them, she thought with a shiver. But it was evident that somebody came there, as there were several books and a newspaper lying on the seat. Kitty looked at the books. They were Homer's Iliad, a volume of Dante, and a very formidable looking law-book. The newspaper was directed to John Dobson.

"And those must be his books, too!" thought Kitty. "It is just as I thought. He could not have an air like that if he were a common farm-laborer! He is doing this for amusement, or for his health, or something,—though I should n't think there could be anything very amusing or healthful in such dreadfully hard work! I wonder what he does do it for! It can't possibly be that he came here because he knew that I was here!"—

And then Kitty laughed at the amount of vanity that could suggest such a possibility in the case of a man who could only have seen her afar off, if at all, since she was sure that she had never seen his face. But then there was Molly! Might not Molly be the attraction? She was pretty enough to attract even a prince,—which Kitty was quite sure now he must be. And Molly certainly did seem a little embarrassed and reserved when she spoke about him.

But this latter way of accounting for the prince's disguise was anything but pleasant to Kitty. She resolved to sound Molly at once, and discover, if possible, what she thought of him. She was rather sorry for the haughty manner in which she had spoken to him last night; she ought to have known from his appearance alone that he was a gentleman! And of course he was justified, under the circumstances, in speaking in a rather abrupt way. She would make up for her rudeness the next time she saw him. Accordingly when she met him that night, coming from the field, she bowed and smiled in the most bewitching manner,—only to receive in return an exceedingly cold and stately bow. Kitty's belief in his lofty station was only confirmed

by this. She had disgusted him by her supercilious manner, but she would "bring him around, yet; it was a great pity if she could n't!" This Miss Kitty said to herself, with a determined toss of her pretty head.

The next time they met a still more beaming smile greeted the young haymaker, and his stateliness melted before it in a considerable degree, and when Kitty stopped and spoke, in such delicately flattering terms, of his courage in stopping Gyp, and of her gratitude to him, Mr. John Dobson proved plainly that, whether he was prince or peasant, he was only a man, and very susceptible to feminine flattery.

They fell into a long conversation, leaning over the gate, in the twilight.

It was a very ridiculous thing, Kitty thought, once or twice; here was she, who had been accustomed, all her life, to the elite of New-York society, and accustomed to turn up her dainty nose at anything outside of her charmed circle, having a social chat, on terms of apparent equality, with a farm-laborer in his shirt-sleeves! But she could not be conscious of the incongruity for long, for her companion was so very entertaining. As she said to Molly, afterward, he was "so well-informed, so cultivated, and he had such a charming manner!"

"How could you be so blind as not to see at once, Molly, that he is an educated and probably wealthy man who is doing this merely from eccentricity?"

Molly laughed.

"Perhaps I may as well tell you who he is, since you are so much interested. Father said he told him in confidence, so I thought perhaps he might not like to have it known, — especially as he only told, at first, the first part of his name. He is John Dobson Conroy, and his home is in Bensonville, about fifty miles from here. His mother is a poor widow, and he has worked his way through college; he is in the law-school at — College, now."

"He lives in Bensonville, and his mother is a poor widow! Are you sure it is true?" said Kitty faintly.

All her gorgeous air-castles were falling, and she felt a little bewildered.

"But I knew he was an educated man! I told you he was n't a common laborer!" she said, rallying a little. "But how does he happen to do such work as this? How

dreadfully poor he must be!" she said disconsolately.

"Oh, it is not at all an uncommon thing, about here, for college students to work on farms in the summer vacation. Yes, of course he must be poor."

Kitty relapsed into silence and meditation. She was wondering why it should be so great a shock and disappointment to her to discover that the young haymaker was not a prince, or anything like one, after all, since it certainly did not concern her. She made a firm resolution that she would have nothing whatever to say to Mr. John Dobson Conroy, acknowledging to herself, with a thrill of mortification, that the resolution was not for his sake but for her own. A feeling which she had never known before, and for which she could not account, had taken possession of her. Was there such a thing as love at first sight? What subtle spell had the young haymaker thrown over her as she stood at the gate with him, in the twilight?

"Molly, you have heard me speak of Dudley Fenton?" she said suddenly, that night. "Well, he is coming here. He has engaged rooms at the hotel at Bloomsbury Centre. He is very nice-looking, and elegant, and all that, and immensely rich besides. I don't know but I shall marry him, some day, Molly."

"But do you love him, Kitty?" asked downright little Molly.

"Love him, child? What a ridiculous question! When you have seen as much of the world as I have you will know that there is something besides love to be thought of!"

"I am as sure as I can be that nothing but love is worth thinking of!" said Molly.

And Kitty laughed, — a shrill, hard laugh that sounded very unlike her own.

The next day came Mr. Dudley Fenton, a "braw wooer" indeed, Molly thought, with his handsome face, and his polished, "society" manner; and the next day, as Fate would have it, Mr. John Dobson Conroy fell ill. He was attacked, suddenly, in the hay-field, and brought home unconscious. It was a sun-stroke; his life was in danger, the doctor said.

And then Kitty forgot her resolution. — or was it only common humanity that made her devote herself to him so assiduously?

Said Mrs. Judkins the housekeeper. —

"I thought she was a dreadful stuck-up

piece, and above lookin' at workin'-folks. Either she's growed dretful benevolent all of a sudden, or there's somethin' more to it!"

Mr. Conroy rallied very soon, either owing to the assiduous attention or to a naturally strong constitution. The doctor pronounced him out of danger in a few days. Then Kitty relaxed her devotion, as a matter of course; indeed she seemed at first to avoid him entirely. But he was so lonely, and he enjoyed so much having her read and sing to him, that it seemed a positive duty to do so! And then the long talks they had "livened him up so amazin'ly," as Mrs. Judkins said.

To Molly fell the task of entertaining Mr. Dudley Fenton, who, though evidently chagrined at Kitty's neglect, did not omit to visit at the farm-house every day.

At length Mr. Conroy was pronounced fully convalescent, and then Kitty turned the cold shoulder upon him decidedly. But she turned it upon Mr. Dudley Fenton also. She would have nothing to say to anybody. She shut herself up in her own room, or else took long, solitary walks. Molly declared that she "did n't know what to make of her," and Mr. Dudley Fenton chewed his yellow mustache, and smiled a bitter smile.

One day Kitty took her solitary way to the little arbor at the foot of the garden, where she had never been since the day when she found John Conroy's books there.

There were books and papers there, now; he evidently came there still. Kitty took one of them up carefully, almost tenderly, then tossed it back on to the seat impatiently.

"I am a fool! Oh, such a fool!" she said, aloud, burying her face in her hands.

The sound of a footstep startled her. Looking up, she saw John Conroy standing in the door. He must have heard her, was her first thought.

"Pardon me," he said. "Don't let me disturb you! I only came for some books that I left here. I am going away."

"You are going away! I thought—Mr. Dunning said that you were going to stay until fall."

"I intended to, but I have decided that it is better for me not to. I cannot stay. You know why!"

He was pale, but his voice was perfectly steady and quiet.

The color leaped into Kitty's cheek. Her head—such a haughty little head!—drooped low.

A sudden light shone in the young man's eyes.

"Kitty, shall I go or stay?" he asked, — not at all as if he remembered that he was a poor haymaker, but as confidently as Mr. Dudley Fenton might have asked.

"Stay!" said Kitty faintly.

A caprice of Fate had led Molly and Mr. Dudley Fenton, in their morning stroll, within hearing of that question and the answer.

Mr. Fenton turned to his companion, with a heightened color and a little mocking smile on his lips, which, fortunately, Molly did not see.

"Molly, shall I go or stay?" he asked.

"But—I thought you cared for Kitty!" faltered Molly, a doubt shadowing the shy joy in her face.

"So did I think until I saw you and discovered my mistake!" answered Mr. Dudley Fenton.

And if Molly was satisfied who need complain?

PEARL'S BEAUTY.

BY THEODORE ARNOLD.

WE kindled fires against the big bole of the tree, and each division of our party cooked its own supper, and ate it when cooked, throwing jests about and across. We were about thirty merry fellows, on our way up Little Feather River to the mines above. After supper we spread our blankets, and I wont say but we took a taste of grog before we laid down to sleep. Grog helps a man to sleep in the open air of a chilly night.

Also, before sleeping we freshened up our fires with a few extra sticks, since the night was chilly. Then Bert Neal and I put our blankets together—big blankets, weighing seventeen pounds the pair—and with two over and two under, laid down to rest.

Now there hadn't been a drop of rain in that region for months, and everything was as dry as pith. That we knew, but we didn't know that the great tres stood on a shell of a trunk instead of a solid post of wood. If we had known how hollow it was, I think we would have shivered a little rather than have brightened our fires the way we did.

Well, as I said, in a few minutes we were all asleep or nearly so, Bert lying so near to my elbow that the sleeves of our blouses touched. I wasn't so sound asleep but I heard by-and-by a sudden crack and a rush, as though an avalanche of great birds were swooping down to devour us; and then something struck me in the face, a smart slap of leaves and twigs, and there was a chorus of screams, and oaths, and shouts all about us. For the big tree had had its underpinning gnawed off by our fires, and had fallen crash over us out of revenge.

Bert didn't stir after the first queer sort of turn he gave. He just laid still. We all picked ourselves up, found we had only a few bruises, then began to laugh at Bert for sleeping so soundly.

"His grog was too strong for him," said one.

"Dreaming of Pearl Blanchard," said another.

At that I stopped laughing and caught a dry bough and set fire to it, so as to see more plainly.

"We'll fire the tree over him," I said,

savagely, for there were times when I felt as though I hated Bert Neal.

The torch I carried made a circle of brightness equal to daylight around it, and the men clustered about, looking like a shoal of fishes around the torch of a fishing-boat at night. We broke a branch or so, and I flung the light of my blaze down where I had been lying.

My God! There lay Bert Neal impaled on a sharp branch of the tree that run into his breast and pinned him right through the heart down to the ground. That branch had put a stop to his dreaming about Pearl Blanchard any more.

There was silence for a moment, then the men went to work to get him out, and I staggered away and laid down on the ground at a distance. And I didn't go near when they buried him in the morning, but I made them give me all his traps, and the little keepsakes he had about him, for I made up my mind to go straight back to the Atlantic coast again. I didn't care about staying in California any longer.

There was one keepsake they couldn't give me, and that was a long lock of silky hair that the fellow had carried in his breast always. That had been driven into his flesh, and only one little end hung out, clotted with blood. So they let it stay.

Some men coming down from the mines to go to San Francisco, I joined them and got on board the first steamer for Nicaragua. I was in a sort of trance the whole way. There was an ever-recurring thought that stung me or stunned me, as my mood was. "He can't dream of Pearl Blanchard any more."

I had a faint consciousness of being landed in a boat, since the steamer couldn't come close to the shore, of being mounted upon a mule so small that I had to kink my legs up to keep my feet from dragging, of a long string of mules before and behind me, of going on board a boat again to cross the lake, and of the two cones of mountains that we steamed between, while the clouds over their peaks swayed and floated in the wind, and glimmered over our heads.

I got waked up by one thing. A young girl fell overboard, and we had pretty hard work to save her from the sharks. Perhaps you didn't know it, but there are sharks in Lake Nicaragua, and about the fiercest creatures I ever saw. I don't know how they got there, unless the lake was once

part of the ocean, and got shut in there, sharks and all, by some roundabout of Nature.

But the girl was saved, though in a very dripping state, and with an ugly peak-nose following hungrily after the boat that had picked her just out of his jaws. I was the one who dragged her in, and naturally I looked at her, and I had very good reason to wake up then, for I held Pearl Blanchard in my arms!

I found out afterwards how she came there. When Bert and I left the East, I as her rejected suitor, Bert accepted on condition that he made himself rich enough to keep her daintily, she had thought to live on with her aunt. But in a few months her aunt died. Then another aunt who was going to California invited Pearl to go with her, and the girl having no home, went. Three months in San Francisco, then they took a notion to go back, and there they were on board the steamer with me. I, wrapped in my maze over Bert, did not dream of such nearness, and had I looked, would not have known that one of those black-robed and veiled ladies off across the deck or in the stateroom was my own Pearl, and she hadn't glanced my way I suppose.

All these changes neither Bert nor I had heard a word about, and perhaps the poor fellow had passed her very door in his toiling and searching for gold for her, and she may have been laughing and playing tinkling songs to her piano inside.

That is the way with women. Pour out your soul at their feet, lay your life down a blank for them to write on, worship them as divinities, and they walk over you, they use you to amuse themselves withal, they say "Yes! yes!" and forget you or laugh at you. But use them as playthings, and they are at your feet.

When I look back through the years, and remember what that girl was, and what I was, and see now what we both are, I wish that I had let the shark have her that day. I thrill all over as I recollect just the look of his slippery nose, and two rows of white sharp teeth, and think how they would have snapped off the pretty white arm that has laid over my shoulder, and how her fair flaxen curls would have waved and floated out on the water, as he and his hungry pack tore the soft flesh from her bones.

Of course a young lady is expected to

favor a lover who has saved her life. It is highly proper and romantic that she should do so, and Pearl Blanchard always did what was proper and romantic. So, after the usual gushing of gratitude, and after she had wept a few becoming tears over poor Bert's fate, when I related it to her, and after I had begun to talk about going away out of her sight—a thing I knew I never should have the strength to do—she just slipped a little white hand into my arm, and said:

"Please don't go!"

So I went to New York with them, and danced attendance, and was called a "friend" when I was a lover, and took the shower of smiles that the selfish fickle girl felt in the mood to bestow upon me. I got a pretty good situation there, and wasn't a bad match for Pearl. I kept her tables covered with books and magazines, her vases filled with flowers, her pockets full of bon-bons, and gave other presents when I got a chance. Indeed she wasn't averse, and would take philopenas or Christmas gifts with only the smallest hesitation.

Not a thought did she give to the poor fellow who had gone out at her bidding, and who now lay in the woods in California with a curl of hair driven straight into his heart. She made it a point to be off with the old love before she was on with the new.

I had a consciousness of this all the time, and I didn't respect the girl, and I grew to have in my heart an under-current of hatred for her; but she had only to look up at me with that smile on her dimpled moonlight face, or to put her hand in mine, or to sing to me with her voice like a bird's, and every other feeling would yield to her fascinations.

Some women have a bewitching way that does not depend on beauty or goodness, and she was one of them. I fancy, too, that she could not help exercising her fascinations. It was her one thought and pleasure. But she was prudent in her coquetties. She never went a step too far, and her talk was of the finest. The noblest sentiments were frequently on her lips, and she spoke of truth, honor and religion as though they were flesh of her flesh.

I lived in a tremor between agony and bliss all that fall. Pearl had promised to marry me in the spring. Besides the ordinary chances, she was as likely as not to break her promise. I knew that her word wasn't worth a breath, but do you

think that I loved her less for knowing that? By no means. The knowledge rather gave my love an added sting of fervor, as you prize that with a yearning passion which may slip from you any moment. Once sure of anything, you grow calm, think of other things, and are next indifferent.

You may prate about respect, honor, constancy and the like. Where do you find constancy chiefly? In dogs, I think. Human beings change. I knew that when Pearl leaned on my shoulder, with her soft curls glistening against my coat, and protested with her sweet voice that she never had loved anybody but me—I knew that she told a lie. I knew that when she vowed eternal fidelity to me, she meant that she was pleased with me at that moment, and that was all. She was not a hypocrite, in that she never said she loved a man unless she did love him at the time. When her heart cooled, you may be pretty sure that her manner would not be warm. There was some comfort in that. You need not despise the girl for such inconstancy. She followed her nature, which was not to love passionately and entirely, but to be very much pleased with persons and things. Real love indeed was not possible to her. She liked men as she liked her bonnets, and changed them as often. I did not envy any one her love, but I envied him *herself*, her witching beauty, her sweet presence, her nameless fascination.

She had been an affectionate and obedient daughter, a kind sister, a tender and dutiful niece, and was a scrupulous and highly respectable member of society, taking great care not to offend Mrs. Grundy. I believed that once my wife, she would be tender and true, having bound herself irrevocably, and that I should then be happy. But to make her my wife. That was the difficulty.

Well, I did my best. I was a handsome fellow in those days, and I made the most of myself. There were other girls I might have had for the asking, and I gave her just a faint touch of jealousy. It did her good. And I took her to theatres, concerts, rode, drove and promenaded with her, and gave her presents. It was all I could do.

The winter went some way. I believe I didn't have one good night's sleep while it lasted. It seemed to me that I held my breath all through. I know I was pretty nervous and worn out when spring came. Then I began to ask Pearl to name the day.

Of course she played off a little; women always do, I suppose, but at last she said the last of May. That was putting it off as far as possible without breaking her promise, and I didn't dare to say too much. It was March, and though three months longer of living on the rack was hard, still three months was not forever.

Besides, by good luck I got promotions in the firm, and could now promise my wife a little more. We went and looked at houses, and I put all my money into one that pleased her. She wanted to partly furnish it with a small portion she had, and her aunt insisted on furnishing the remainder. Then my salary would keep us going. When I saw Pearl choosing carpets and hemming towels, I began to believe that I was safe, and was to be happy, after all, and when she would turn to me as we went through the house, and smile and speak of our home, and tell what we would do when we came to live there, I thought my heart would break with happiness, and I would turn away from her lest she should see how wild she made me. I feared she would care less for me, if she knew her full power.

March crept past, and I counted the minutes to April. And with the first week of April came a break in my affairs. The head of the firm wanted me to go South on some business of importance which would detain me about six weeks. I had no excuse that I would give, and my position depended on my going. If the business were well done, it would be a great advantage to me, and Mr. Wild told me smilingly that I should have a percentage on the commission to buy my bride a wedding gift with. Of course I could not say, "Pearl is coquettish and fickle, and I am afraid she will jilt me if I leave her a chance." I tried to get off by the most flimsy excuses, but without success. Go I must. Even Pearl urged it, reminding me of the money gain. Pearl was an uncommonly good manager, and quite well aware of the value of money.

I couldn't help reproaching her a little with her willingness to part with me; but she only laughed at me, and called me sentimental. Then I tried to persuade her to marry me privately, and go with me. To this she only gave me a stare of mingled astonishment and indignation. To be sure, it was not a nice proposition to make to a lady who was studying night and day how she could make herself the most charming

and admired bride of the season. But I did not quite understand the value that ladies set upon such things.

The upshot of the whole matter was that I went, with what a sinking of the heart I do not say. I asked no promises of Pearl. I scarcely said good-by to her; but I held her in my arms with such an agony tugging at my heart as I never felt before nor since. She wept, of course, and promised to write twice a week, and to think of me constantly, and to be all ready to be married when I returned, and she laid her sweet face close to mine, and—then I went.

I got two letters the first week, one the second, none the third, a long one on the fourth taken up chiefly with excuses; and that was the last. I was returning so soon that it was not worth while to write again.

I announced my return to take place a few days after I was expected to arrive, intending to give Pearl a surprise, and to spare myself being watched for and given a prepared welcome. Take people by surprise if you want to get at the hearts of them.

I felt choked with excitement when I drew near the city, and as we steamed across from Jersey City to New York in the evening, my head was so unsteady that I didn't dare look over the rail into the water for fear I should fall in.

I wouldn't take a carriage, but hurried up Broadway with my portmanteau in my hand, and almost ran home. I let myself into my boarding-house without seeing any one, and went up to my room. I was glad to escape observation and the necessity of greeting acquaintances. Perhaps I wanted to hear my first welcome from Pearl.

I dressed hurriedly and went down to the square where she lived. I was so excited and fearful, that I wouldn't have been surprised to see the house a heap of ruins, or to find a church built on the site of it, or to behold any change. But there it stood just as I left it, with the light shining out through the colored glass over the street door, and the parlor window curtains softly glowing. I stood on the opposite side of the street looking and trying to calm myself before entering. I never was piously inclined, but as I stood there so near to the girl whom I loved better than my life, and knew by the looks of things that all was safe, and when I remembered my long journey and the many ways in which harm could have fallen on me or Pearl during that

separation, I had a sudden perception of God—of the Being who overrules and who pities. He seemed good to me at that moment, and if I didn't thank him with my lips, I did with my heart.

I believe that then my future hung in the balance, and the good and the evil bid for my soul at that hour. Pearl Blanchard's hand turned the scale, a white little hand loaded with rings I had given her, a hand which should have been mine in a fortnight; and as the beam tilted, down went my soul!

As I looked with my heart softening so, I saw a shadow on the curtain. Such a pretty shadow! A regular profile, with a flow of light curls swinging about it, and a hand was put up to put the curls back as she stopped in crossing the room as though to answer some one who spoke to her.

I couldn't wait another instant, for it seemed as though she looked directly towards me and beckoned me. All fear and doubt faded out of my heart, and I ran across and let myself in by the latchkey which they had given me. For I had been such a constant visitor, and was so nearly one of the family, that it was not worth while to ring. I opened the parlor door as softly as possible, and eagerly looked for my beauty. She sat facing me smiling and lovely, with that sweet infantine expression which her face sometimes wore, and which I always thought she knew how to put on. She held some bright flosses in her hand, and her aunt sitting near, was bending to look at them. Opposite them, with his back to me, sat a gentleman. The light fell bright over my Pearl, and I saw clearly the expression of her face when she first caught sight of me. It was a look of surprise and momentary embarrassment.

"Why, can it be?" she exclaimed. "What a surprise! We did not expect you for several days."

As she spoke she came forward and gave me her hand and a smile, and did not refuse the kiss I offered. Her aunt gave me a cordial enough welcome, and the gentleman also rose and offered his hand. It was Mr. Wild, the head of our firm.

"Dropped in to see when they expected you," he said, smilingly. "Perhaps I need not remain any longer."

"O, don't go, Mr. Wild!" Pearl said, eagerly. "I am sure you must want to ask about the business, and why not now as well as to-morrow?"

After a little urging he took his seat again, and instead of an hour alone with my betrothed, I had the pleasure of recounting my business transactions, and seeing Pearl give Mr. Wild two glances when she gave me one.

Wild wasn't a handsome man, but he was distinguished-looking, and a gentleman. Moreover he was rich. He was a bachelor of forty or thereabouts, and had the reputation of being insensible to the attractions of women, consequently they all tried to attract him. There was a romantic story of his having been deceived by a pretty jilt when he was quite young, but I don't know how that was.

Well, we talked stocks and sales, and percentage till ten o'clock, when Mr. Wild started in earnest.

"You will come up to-morrow?" said Pearl to me, seeming to take it for granted I was going also.

I looked at her. She never blushed, but met my look with the most perfect coolness, and seemed to think that I had answered her.

"Where did you get your flowers, Pearl?" I asked, while the aunt and Mr. Wild were saying last words.

There was a magnificent bouquet of hot-house flowers on the table.

"That?" she said, carelessly. "I think aunt claims that as a gift from Mr. Wild. Nobody brings me flowers when you are away," with a tender tone and glance.

"Are you all ready, Pearl?" I asked at that.

"Ready for what?" she asked, with a look of surprise.

"To be married, darling."

"O, now, I've got to disappoint you, my poor boy!" she said, coaxingly. "You have not heard of Cousin Allen's death?"

"No. But what difference does that make to you? He was only your second cousin, and you were hardly acquainted with him."

"Good-evening," said Mr. Wild at my elbow, and Pearl smiled bewitchingly and held out her hand to him.

It was as though a flame of fire wrapped me when I looked at him as their hands met. In his eyes I saw that he loved her. That searching passionate gaze, the lingering touch, told the story. And Pearl's cheeks suddenly blushed as they had never blushed for me.

"Are you going?" Mr. Wild asked, looking at me with eyes that sparkled.

"Not yet, sir," I answered. And then he bowed and went, and the aunt disappeared with him.

"Pearl, what does this mean about your cousin?" I asked, taking a seat opposite her.

"Are you ill?" she exclaimed. "How pale you are!"

"I am well. Will you explain?"

She pushed a stool to my side, and sat down, leaning on the arm of my chair, and touching my sleeve with her white fingers.

"As I told you, Cousin Allen is dead. He died after I wrote you for the last time. And though I was not intimate with them, still he was my mother's cousin, you know, and I must pay some respect to his memory. Then he was a man of high standing, and it would be commented on if I were married just on the edge of his death. Besides, and a still stronger reason, he left me in his will a thousand dollars, and his wife wrote inviting me to the funeral, which will be tomorrow, and saying that she would like to have me wear black six months. There are so few relations."

"Then our marriage will have to be quite private," I said, looking at her till she had to look down.

"It will have to be put off till the mourning is over," she said, in a low tone.

There was a silence of a minute, then I said, "We might be married privately, Pearl. You promised me, you recollect."

"How can you persist in asking such a thing?" she exclaimed, rising indignantly. "A private marriage is mean, it does not look respectable. And I will never consent to be married while I am wearing black. I think you are very cruel and unreasonable. I tell you I cannot be married till fall. If you are displeased with that, I cannot help it. If I am not worth waiting for, I am not worth having."

I swallowed down something that rose in my throat, and answered her gently, "You are worth waiting for, Pearl, and I will wait."

She didn't look altogether delighted, but we had a sort of reconciliation, and I went home.

Men have gone crazy with less than I endured that summer. Pearl and her aunt went over to New Jersey and boarded during the hot weather, and Mr. Wild boarded

with them. I used to go down twice a week, but couldn't leave every day. Of course Mr. Wild came in town every day, but he was not confined as I was. Anybody could see that he and Pearl were lovers, or that he loved her and she allowed him to. But there had been no explanation between them, and I still apparently kept my place in relation to her.

They were coming back to town in October, and Pearl was going to leave off black then. All this time I had been so patient with Pearl's caprices and coldness, that sometimes she would look at me in wonder and with a sort of suspicion. I wasn't noted for the lamblike virtues, and I think that she sometimes suspected mischief under my silence. But she was too much engrossed in other things to give much thought to my words.

But she looked a little frightened one day, the day they returned to town. I went down to come up with them, though she had told me I need not take that trouble, Mr. Wild having offered to escort them. We came up all four together, a pleasant enough party, apparently. But when I found Mr. Wild's carriage waiting for them at the ferry, I felt the blood rushing hot to my head.

"Thank you, sir, but I will take a hack for Pearl," I said, and I couldn't help my voice having a deep hard sound.

"Since Mr. Wild is so kind," interposed the aunt.

"You can accept his kindness of course," I said. "Pearl and I will go in this." And I took her hand to lead her to the carriage I had signalled. She hesitated and colored, but my hand held her like a vice, and I drew her along in spite of herself.

"What a temper you have!" she exclaimed, as the door closed on us. "You are quite white. I am afraid of you."

She did look afraid, and she had reason to be, for at that instant I had as lief have seen her dead as alive. I was no fool, and I saw the end that was to come; but I determined not to give up tamely, and that my defeat should not be their triumph. I resolved, too, that she should have no excuse for a quarrel with me. I spoke as gently and softly as I ever did in my life.

"Am I bad-tempered because I prefer to have my little Pearl all to myself? Remember she is almost my wife, and I must begin to practise claiming my rights."

She colored deeply, and sat looking out of the window in an embarrassed silence.

"Our six months is almost up, you know," I went on. "It has been a long and bitter six months to me, but I do not regret it now. You are worth waiting for, and now that my waiting is almost done, I feel rewarded. You know I tried to please you."

She still sat silent and embarrassed, looking out at the window. One soft ungloved hand lay on her lap. I reached and touched it with mine. She withdrew it pettishly.

"I don't like sentiment in the street," she said.

"Where do you like it, Pearl?" I said, quietly. "You check all such things in private also. Will you tell me what place you consider the suitable one for me to be allowed to touch your hand?"

"Always sarcastic and ironical," she said, poutingly. And here we drew up at the door of their house and the driver stood at the step. "Are you coming in?" she asked, over her shoulder.

"Not now. I will come up this evening," I said, and went away.

I walked up and down a long time that evening, watching the windows, before I could muster courage to go in. I saw Mr. Wild go in, saw their shadow on the curtain as they met hand to hand, and knew that they were sitting there alone. For there was a light in the aunt's chamber, and she was probably resting after the fatigues of her wonderful journey of three hours. Women are so delicate upon occasion! I had made up my mind to have an understanding that very night, and was getting myself up to it.

"I went in very softly, and instead of going into the parlor, went into the dining-room just back of it and connecting with it. I did not propose anything to myself in going there, except that I wanted to be near them, and yet dreaded to face Pearl and know the truth. When I first heard their voices it did not occur to me to listen till I thought I heard Pearl weeping. Then I went near the door and heard her say, 'I was grateful to him for saving my life, and I fancied I loved him.'"

That was enough. It showed what their conversation was. I went through the hall without waiting for another word, and, opened the parlor door. Mr. Wild was walking up and down evidently trying to com-

mand himself. The man had some sense of honor, after all. Indeed I never blamed him. Pearl sat wiping her eyes, her head drooping till her fair curls swept the table beside her.

I greeted them both civilly, took a seat opposite Pearl, and asked Mr. Wild if he would sit and talk a few minutes.

"Certainly," he said, firmly, evidently knowing perfectly well what was to come.

"We are all so intimate that there can be no secrets," I said, as he took a seat. "I have a question to ask Pearl, Mr. Wild, and I am sure she will not object to answering it before you."

Then I turned to her as she sat pale and frightened. "Pearl, you promised to marry me when the six months of your mourning were over. Will you fulfil your promise now?"

"I cannot! I cannot!" she cried, wringing her hands.

"Will you ever redeem it?" I asked, then.

"I cannot!" she said again. "I do not love you well enough. It was only gratitude, and not love."

"It looked very much like love at one time," I said, coldly. "I think it was your kind of love while it lasted. You vowed that it was love, and that you had never loved before. You said the same to poor Bert Neal who lies thousands of miles away with a curl of your hair in his dust. You said the same thing to Frank Ayre, who went to sea when you jilted him, and has never been heard of since. I do not know how many others may have heard the same story. Perhaps Mr. Wild has."

"You insult me!" she cried, indignantly, her face crimson with shame at such exposure.

"You take an unmanly advantage of your position," I think," Mr. Wild said, firmly. "You have some reason to complain, and no one will wonder that you find it hard to give up such a prize. But it was easy for Pearl to mistake her gratitude for love, and if her pity and tenderness, and her ignorance of her own heart have led her to speak more warmly to those who loved her than she should, the ones so favored should be the last to complain of the amiability which would have made them happy if it could."

Pearl lifted her face from her hands where it had dropped, and gave him a look of beaming and tender gratitude. She had reason, for she could never have excused herself as

he excused her. Probably she never had dreamed that she was so amiable.

"May I ask if you intend to marry her yourself, Mr. Wild?"

"I have not mentioned the subject to her," he said, "and shall not while she is engaged to you."

"I am no longer engaged to him," she exclaimed, angrily. "I have borne insult enough, and tyranny enough. I insist that this conversation shall cease. I dismiss you, sir. Never come near me again!"

She drew the rings from her fingers and flung them on the table.

Mr. Wild stepped forward, flushed with eagerness, and extended his hands to her. She turned to him, and for an instant hid her false fair face in his bosom.

Then—no matter about telling particulars. The papers were full of them. Columns and columns were devoted to that scene and those that followed it. I had the pleasure of seeing my picture, and Pearl's, and Mr. Wild's, and the aunt's, and everything in the house, even to the cat, I believe, pasted on walls, rocks, fences, even on sidewalks. Thousands crowded to catch a glimpse of the wretch who had flung vitriol in the face of his lady-love because she preferred another man, and every item of our story, with the most absurd changes, additions and exaggerations, was published from Dan to Beersheba.

In it all I had one comfort. Pearl's beauty, that had been the bane of so many lives, was gone forever. She was almost hideous, I heard, and was blind of the eye. Such tales reached me in my cell of the sufferings of this lovely girl, that I could but laugh, thinking what fools people are. If they could look into the heart, they would have seen more selfishness, more refined cruelty under that soft exterior, than in a dozen like me. I would not harm a worm unless he stung me. And Pearl Blanchard had stung me to the soul. I lost heaven for her.

But she could break no more hearts, and win no more, and I was avenged. I did not pity her. Her soul was hideous in my sight, and I had been held only by the mesh of her witching ways. They were gone forever, and I was free.

As I have said, the town rang with the affair. It was said, or pretended, that Pearl was in danger of death from distress of mind; and such was the sympathy felt for her by fools whom she wouldn't wipe

her shoes on, that it was feared I would be torn out of jail and lynched. They took me by night from one jail to another for safety.

Then came the trial. By that time Pearl's life was out of danger, but she was blind of one eye, and was so prostrated by "suffering of mind and body," the papers said, that she could not leave her room. It went hard with her, you see, to have her pretty face spoiled.

Of course the trial was one of the events of the day, and gossips came from far and near to stare at me. I let them stare and threaten, half because I could not help it, half because I did not care anything about it.

But there had arisen another party. First, young ladies began to think I had been ill-used, and to make a hero of romance of me; next another class of philanthropists made up their minds that I was crazy. So that in all the sea of faces that made the courtroom one mass of life, there were many which expressed sympathy and pity.

The case was a clear one, and I called no witnesses. Mr. Wild came in with a very pale face and told his story. Everything was just as he said. He never looked toward me. I think it was more through shame than horror, for my lawyer had told me that the affair between him and Pearl was quite over. Of course he did not want a one-eyed fright for a wife. Nobody blamed him. But I think he knew that I would have married her had I been in his place. Everything went on straight to the end. The doctors testified to the state of the patient, and the faces of my friends grew dark, while my enemies could scarcely be kept quiet. At last I rose to plead my own case. I had kept all my strength for that. I meant to brand her name with a deeper stain than I had burnt into her forehead—and I did it.

There were murmurs at first, but they subsided as I went on. I began with my first acquaintance with her, and described her lures, her encouragement, her rejection, Bert's acceptance, his death, all the story from first to last. I told that gaping crowd more of my heart than I had ever told her; how patient I had been, what agonies I had suffered in silence, how I had stood outside her house night after night leaving her, to watch her light till it went out, how I had spent on her every dollar that I could earn,

and sought to gratify her every wish. All my hoarded passion broke out and swept them like a torrent. I showed them the pretty, supercilious, heartless toy, of which they had made an idol, walking over the souls of men with a smile on her lips, treading truth and honor under her little feet. I called on every man hearing me to defend his own heart against such ruin as mine had known; I called on every woman to make herself worthy the name of woman by denouncing such baseness as that which had ruined me, body and soul, through my holiest and most sacred affections.

I don't know how long I spoke, but I know that I spoke with breathless vehemence, and that men and women were weeping about me. I ended with one sentence:

"I would not kill her, because life is sacred, and I wished her to repent; but I have put it out of her power to inflict on any other heart the tortures which mine has suffered."

I sat down amid weeping and applause and cries of "Discharge him!" "He is innocent!"

Of course I knew what it was worth. I knew that if Pearl could have come into court at that moment with the pretty face she had worn a few weeks before, and could have looked at the judge and jury, and the crowd, with her appealing tearful eyes, and have stretched out her white hands in one mute entreaty, they would have found me guilty of any crime of which she might have chosen to accuse me.

As it was, the jury had to find me guilty, of course, but they recommended me to the judge for mercy. His honor, who, fortunately for me, had been shamefully jilted when he was young, gave me one year in the State prison instead of two, as he had probably intended. And three months after the governor pardoned me out.

Pearl Blanchard still lives, dragging out a miserable existence, nothing left of her now her beauty is gone; and I am unmarried, and shall always remain so. I am prosperous in my worldly affairs, but peace and happiness are far from me.

On dark nights I go and walk about her house, and look up at the windows. Last night I saw her shadow on the curtain. There was a veil over her face. They say that she wears that veil even before her aunt, and that no one ever sees her.

Don't imagine that because I walk there I wish to look on her face now. I would rather the dead rose from their graves to look at me than ever meet Pearl Blanchard face to face again. But some fascination seems to draw me there; and last night when I saw that shadow, and remembered the graceful, witching creature who once met me there, clasped her hands over my arm, leaned on my shoulder, and smiled in my face, the wild sobs rose in my throat. It was as though I had buried my love alive, and heard her stir in her grave.

Do you wonder that I wish I had left her in Lake Nicaragua for the sharks to eat?

PHANTOM ISLAND.

BY W. H. MACY.

Captain John Gartland, well known in New London and the neighboring ports, tells this story of his early life, when he was a cruiser in the high latitudes of the Southern Ocean. Some of the general features of it can be vouched for by several of his old shipmates who are still living, but the details must rest upon his own veracity, which is believed to be on a par with that of the average old-school seaman.

When I was nineteen years old, I shipped as an ordinary seaman for a voyage to Desolation and the Crozettes, in the old ship "Diogenes," commanded by Captain Jerry Church. Our voyage was in quest of sperm or right whales, sea-elephants—in short, anything, whether cetaceous or amphibious, that would yield oil to fill the ship.

We had met with average luck after reaching our cruising-ground, off the Crozette Islands, but a heavy blow coming on which compelled us to lie to under short canvas for several days, we drifted away off to the southward and eastward, until we found ourselves in what was to us "unknown seas," estimating from our dead reckoning only, for we had not caught a glimpse of the sun for a week or more. When at last the weather cleared up, to our great astonishment land was seen in the southern board, very distant, but still clearly and unquestionably land.

As our chart showed none in the part of the ocean where our reckoning placed us, we at once concluded that we had stumbled upon a very important discovery, and kept the ship away to explore and examine it more nearly. If land existed in that latitude, it was pretty sure to be well stocked with seals and sea-elephants; and if so, the duration from the regular course of our voyage, which we had regarded as, in the highest degree unfortunate, might yet turn out greatly to our advantage.

The island was not a large one, extending only about ten miles in its longest dimension, north and south, while it was not more than four miles across at the broadest part. At its northern extremity the vol-

canic rocks were piled up, forming a high peak, which, towering aloft, looked at a great distance not unlike a gigantic human figure: a vast Colossus or a giant standing guard over the treasures of enchanted seas. But as we rapidly approached it, the outlines of the peak stood out more boldly from the mist, sublime in its rugged grandeur, and we began to get a better view of the main body of the island, which was quite irregular, and of no great height. At the south end there was a low point two or three miles in length, flat and sandy in appearance, and we steered in boldly to get a near view of what was in the eyes of a New-London whaler like Sinbad's "Valley of Diamonds." For the low land on the point was literally swarming over its whole extent with sea-elephants which lay basking there, quite unused to the sight of an enemy, and totally unconscious of danger. Captain Church fairly jumped up and down on his quarter-deck in the excitement of his feelings.

"There's our voyage waiting for us! Right there, on that point! Now, if we can only find a place to moor the ship, we may make a good haul, even before the winter season sets in. We must explore the island all round while we have this slant of weather, and see what the prospect is."

We spent all that day and the next in circumnavigating our new discovery, but we were obliged to give up all hope of finding any place where we would venture to anchor the ship. There was no bay, and not even any bend or bight of the coast sufficient to afford shelter as a safe anchorage. Most of the island was bold and rocky, with here and there patches of beach well stocked with elephants; but the sandy point offered the only beach capable of being worked, and there, if at all, we must look for any good returns for our labor.

The surf broke heavily upon the shore, and it was only in very moderate weather that a boat could get on and off, but we succeeded in making a landing, and at once began the work of slaughter among the amphibious monsters. We skinned and

hauled off about two hundred barrels of blubber, stringing the pieces on ropes, like dried apples, to get them out through the breakers. But a change of weather came on, and as the month of April was at hand, when winter may be looked for in those Antarctic latitudes, the captain determined to land a party to remain on shore, killing and skinning until he should return in the spring with his ship. The second mate was to command the beach gang, and he selected six men, of whom I was one, to go on shore with him. Although the sea was rather rugged for our purpose, and we worked under great difficulties, we succeeded in landing a stock of provisions, some lumber for building a small shanty, and various articles of necessity, and also hauled on shore a long raft of empty casks, which were to be filled by us with elephant blubber. This work having been completed, and the final instructions given to the beach-header, the "Diogenes" filled away for her whaling-grounds in lower latitudes, leaving seven of us to our own resources in this desolate, out-of-the-way place which we had christened Phantom Island.

We erected our shanty, and made everything cosy and comfortable, as far as our means would permit, against the approach of winter; after which we went to work upon the great object of our voyage. As the beasts were numerous, and not at all wild, we had no difficulty in killing all that we could take care of from day to day, taking precautions not to spread any unnecessary alarm among the survivors; and thus in a few weeks of hard labor we had all our casks filled with blubber, and were ready to rest and take matters easy during the severe winter season that was already stealing upon us. But we still continued to kill some elephants each day, collecting the fat in heaps at different points. The weather would be so cold that it would keep all winter well enough, losing but little of the oil, and our chief care about it was to contrive ingenious devices in the way of scarecrows, to protect it from the attacks of voracious birds.

We had one of the ship's whaleboats on shore with us, and now that we were more at leisure, the second mate resolved to make a cruise of discovery in the boat, coasting up the west side of the island, taking a look at the several rocky beaches where we from the ships had seen herds of

elephants collected, and studying the possibility of working those places at some future day, when the treasures of the point should have been exhausted. Six men were required to man the boat, and as I was suffering at the time from a very painful boil or carbuncle, I remained behind alone, while all the rest went off early in the morning in high spirits. It was fair weather when they set out, but cold, the wind being light from the southward. We had carried the boat across the point, where it was not more than half a mile wide, that they might launch her on the west side, for we had built our house near the eastern beach, as offering the best lee against the prevailing winds of those latitudes. As soon as I saw them well outside the breakers, and speeding away to the north with sail and oars, I returned to our rude home, feeling rather sad and lonely, and almost wishing I had insisted upon joining the party myself, notwithstanding the pain in my arm, and the fact that the seventh man in a whaleboat is in his own and every other man's way. I remained at home until afternoon, when, going out again, I noticed indications of a change of wind, and, as it looked likely to come from the northwest, I became uneasy about the return of the boats, fearing the surf might rise on the beach so as to make landing dangerous.

I hurried across to the landing-place where the boats had been launched in the morning, but, straining my eyes to the utmost, I could see nothing. The party must soon return, for the second mate had declared that he should on no account be absent all night. He must certainly have noted the signs in the heavens, and it was unaccountable that he should not have made all haste to return. As hour after hour wore away, and the sun went down with no boat in sight, I felt quite certain that some accident must have happened to her. I went back to the house, but could not stay there, and putting on an extra jacket, prepared to pass the night upon the beach. For there was still a hope that they might come within hearing during the darkness, and, if the surf should be too heavy for safe landing, I could at least warn them off to go round the end of the point and land on the east side.

All night long I patrolled the beach, but neither saw nor heard anything of my lost shipmates. The wind had indeed set in steadily from the northwest, but was still

but a gentle breeze, and though the surf had increased a little, it was not at all dangerous at daybreak the next morning. As the sun rose clear and bright, I was taking my last lingering look to the northward, intending to turn away home to get some sleep if I could, when my eyes rested upon a distant object which looked like a boat. I remained for a long time rooted in my tracks, gazing at it with my whole soul in my eyes. It was nearing me slowly, and I made out after a time that it was not propelled by human power, for no men were to be seen in it, but was merely drifting with the wind and tide.

Could it be possible that the crew were asleep in the bottom of the boat? But I soon dismissed that supposition as absurd.

For the next two hours I hardly took my gaze from her as she drew nearer and nearer. It was indeed our boat; but where, oh! where were all my shipmates?

She was drifting not in a direction parallel to the coast, but working in-shore on a converging line, so that I estimated she would strike the beach at some distance below where I then stood, and very near the extreme southern end of the point.

I laid my plans accordingly, for that boat must be saved, even at the imminent risk of my own life. As she gradually neared the land, I followed on, keeping abreast of her until she was so near that I saw her already feel the influence of the rollers, for she was floating lightly and buoyantly. There could be no further delay, and throwing off my heaviest outside jacket, I rushed down the slope of the beach as a wave receded, and plunged head foremost into the next approaching roller. Cold as the water was, for the chill seemed to take away my breath entirely, I fought my way through and swam to the boat, not a minute too soon, for I pulled myself into her, and got her head round with the steering oar just in time to save her from drifting broadside on into the breakers. All the oars were in the boat, and also the mast and sails, which I soon managed to set, and taking the steering oar again, got her under full control and rapid headway. Doubling the southern cape of the island, I worked her up by short tacks along the eastern shore to a good smooth landing-place near the house. By getting the oars under her as rollers, and exerting what seemed to me superhuman strength, I succeeded at last in getting her up where

she would be secure from any ordinary breakers; and nearly worn out with cold, with hard labor, and want of sleep, I returned to the shanty for warmth and rest, and to reflect upon the strange situation.

I had regarded the saving of the boat as a matter of the very first importance, not only for the use she might be to me, but she was in fact the only means by which I might aid my shipmates, if still living, or ascertain their fate, if indeed it could ever be ascertained at all. And it now occurred to me as I thought over the matter at leisure, after a warm supper, that there could be only one reasonable solution of the mystery. My shipmates must have landed, and by some chance or accident their boat had been floated off and gone adrift, leaving them marooned on a wild beach, with no means of getting away. They would of course in such a case attempt to return overland to the point by climbing the rocks, if such a thing were possible. But I could do no more for them at present, so I shut myself up, and, quite exhausted, soon fell into a long and deep sleep.

I did not awake until broad daylight the next morning, when I found the wind had increased to a howling gale, so that it was hardly possible to stir abroad. This continued for two days, and when the gale was at its height it certainly equalled in force anything that I have ever experienced. But my little shanty was firmly planted on its foundations, and heavily loaded with stones on its nearly flat roof.

I had plenty of provisions, and no want of fuel, for I could draw upon the store of elephant blubber. While riding out this gale I had ample time to consider my very remarkable situation, and to lay plans for my future course. My first duty seemed to be to find out if possible the fate of my comrades, in case they did not return overland within a day or two after the storm should be blown out.

When the wind again came from the southward, I felt that an Antarctic winter was really upon me, for the weather set in quite different from our previous experience on the island, being intensely cold. A whole week passed without any signs of Mr. Burns or any of his party, and it was hardly possible that they could still be alive. But as soon as I had weather which I judged suitable to undertake the voyage, I set about launching my boat, feeling at the

same time very doubtful whether I should ever succeed in hauling her up again, if I returned in safety. But I had set everything upon the hazard of what I believed to be my duty. Taking a good stock of provisions and other articles with me, I boldly put to sea, doubling the cape again, and running along the western shore before a high wind which filled my boat's sails. The breeze continued fair and steady as I ran past several coves or indentations in the bold coast, inspecting them closely, but in vain; discovering no signs of any living thing except penguins and other sea-birds, with the sleek and lazy sea-elephants everywhere among them, like monarchs of the animal kingdom. I kept on, determined to satisfy myself by making the entire circuit of the island if I could. The cold was severe, but I had taken all possible precaution against it, and had even brought all the materials for starting a fire on a bed of sand in the boat, if it became necessary to do it. I sailed along as closely as was prudent at the very base of the lofty Phantom Rock, which appeared worth examining. I found on drawing nearer that it might be easily entered, and afforded good shelter for the boat; moreover, an irresistible something told me that I should here find the key to the mystery. Taking in my sail, and using my steering oar as a scull, I forced her ahead into the little haven, and saw what seemed to freeze my blood in my veins! Within a few feet of me, huddled together as if to get the last warmth from each other's bodies, were all my shipmates—six in number—stiff and stark. I could read the whole story at a glance. They had all strayed over the broken rocks in the cove beyond, and while thus temporarily out of sight of the boat, she had drifted away, not having been securely made fast. When they had returned, no boat was in view, for a drift of fifty yards westward from the mouth of the cove would take her entirely out of sight. Imprisoned in this fearful place, with absolutely nothing to live upon, and without even the means of getting a fire, they had sunk into despair, and had in the few succeeding days all perished of cold and starvation!

It needed but a look and a touch to assure me that they were past all help; indeed, the ravenous birds had already begun their fearful work. With a shuddering and sinking of the heart, I turned away, and leaping

again into my boat, pushed her out to sea as quickly as I could. Nothing remained for me now but to go back to the starting-place, and I sped impatiently on, circumnavigating the island. The gigantic phantom, towering into the sky above me, was now invested with tenfold terrors, and I was seized with a shuddering tremor whenever I turned my head to look backward upon it. Every scream of a sea-bird seemed in my ears like the wail of a dying man. I was so agitated in mind that I was quite unfit for the difficult task of managing my boat alone, especially as the wind and sea had materially increased before I arrived back at the landing-place. In attempting to head her straight on shore, I lost control of the steering oar at the most critical moment, and the next instant found myself floundering in the breakers, with quite enough to do to save my life, while the frail craft, thrown broadside on, was crushed and wrecked beyond all hope of repairs. Exhausted with my struggle for life, and chilled to the marrow by my cold immersion, I made my way to the house, which now was my only reliance for shelter, warmth, and life through the severe winter now commencing.

You may try to imagine if you can what my feelings were at the certainty that I was indeed the only human being in this desolate place, with my last means of egress cut off by the destruction of the boat, and on an island so entirely unknown that I could not expect the sight of a vessel until the "Diogenes" should return in the spring. And what if owing to any accident she should not return? I dared not dwell upon this thought, but dismissed it as quickly as possible. To be sure I was young and hopeful, and soon schooled myself to look on the bright side of the situation. I had a snug house over my head, and no scarcity of fuel for keeping me warm. The provisions on hand were sufficient to last one man for two years, besides the resources of the island in the way of food. I had no need to expose myself much during the winter; nothing to do but to make myself comfortable, if that were possible, to kill time, and ward off the scurvy as best I could. So I settled down into a Crusoe life, which lasted four months according to my calendar, and the details of which would be too monotonous to dwell upon. I believe that I have certainly as good a stock of resources within

myself as the average of my fellow-men; but this lonely, monotonous life was dreadful to me, and grew more so from day to day, instead of my becoming reconciled to it. My surroundings seemed even more horrible than would have been the case if the fate of Mr. Burns and his crew had remained unknown to me; for there was that lofty spire of Phantom Rock ever in sight, towering into the sky like a vast monument over the common grave of my shipmates, and the voices of the winds howling around it seemed to be calling upon me to join them in the other world. This freak of the imagination took possession of me so strongly that I could never turn my face northward and look up at the pinnacle without a shudder, while at the same time I was conscious of a strange fascinating influence drawing me towards it.

The backbone of winter was broken at last, and the time was drawing near for the return of my ship, when one night I was roused from my slumbers by a low rumbling sound, which appeared to come from the direction of the dreadful Phantom Rock. I jumped to my feet, and, pulling on my jacket, rushed out into the open air. The night was intensely dark, and a fresh breeze blowing from the westward. The sound had ceased, but there seemed to me something ominous in the air, and I was soon sensible that a great and general movement was in progress among the herds of elephants which swarmed the island in a body, for I ran down the beach a short distance where I could see a portion of them crowding each other in solid phalanx down the slope, and tumbling with loud snorts of terror into the surf; they put to sea and disappeared, only to be followed by others, until the last had vanished. Vast armies of penguins pressed by me like waddling old women, all headed toward the sea, for all animated nature seemed to have taken the alarm and to be on the move.

I had heard of rats deserting a sinking ship, and it seemed to me that the instinct of my dumb companions had forewarned them of some great calamity impending over the island. Yet all was still around me but the rush of the wind and the roaring of the breakers on the beach, while the great Phantom, dark and sombre, loomed more gigantic than ever, and seemed to call for more victims. I little knew at that moment how many brave men were in the

dreadful agony of drowning at its very base.

Impelled by an uneasy fascination, I took my way *not* towards home, but across the point to the weather shore, where I stood for a while looking seaward, though I could not have told why, or what I expected or hoped to discover. Suddenly the monotonous roar of the surf was broken by a rattling sound, something flashed up on the crest of a breaker, and then I heard something like a human voice.

Yes! A fearful cry of distress!

I rushed down to the water's edge as the roller came in, and a large spar with rigging attached was driven past me with great violence, ploughing endwise deeply into the sand.

But I had eyes only for a dark object clinging to it with the grasp of death!

I lifted the poor man to his feet, and was overjoyed to find that he still had life in him. Becoming conscious that help was at hand, he made a great effort to aid himself, and thus, half supporting, half carrying him, I made my way to the house, where my fire was constantly burning.

As soon as he was a little rested, I started out for the beach again, where I cruised about for an hour, by which time I was convinced that no more lives could possibly be saved from the wreck. Other broken pieces of spars and a few light articles were thrown up, among the rest one of the sections of a ship's main-hatches, which, being easily portable, I took on my head and carried home, throwing it down near the door of the shanty.

I found my new comrade so far recovered that he was able to talk, and his first word told me that he was a Frenchman. I knew some words of his tongue, and he, being an old adventurer, had picked up a smattering of ours; so that through the medium of very bad English and still worse French, I got at the particulars of his story, which was a brief but terrible one. He belonged to the French corvette or sloop-of-war "Bucephale," outward bound for the French colonies in the Pacific, but she had been delayed pursuant to a portion of her commander's instructions in making some explorations among the Crozette Islands. Thence laying her course well southward, to make a fair wind of it, she was proceeding on her voyage toward a more genial climate, as they supposed. There was no island laid

down on the chart as being near their track, and, confident that they had plenty of sea-room, the look-outs had been fatally careless. No danger was perceived until the ship was close upon it, and it was too late even to make an effort to alter her course. The "Bucephale" had brought up at the northwestern angle of the island, at the very base of the terrible rock. Indeed, a flying jib-boom had struck the very tower itself, and the bowsprit was driven in upon the mass of rocks, while with the heave of two or three succeeding waves the whole fabric went to pieces, so gradually that no plan for saving life could be even thought of, much less carried out. There were four men clinging to the spar when first it drifted clear of the wreck, but my companion was the only one left when it reached the shore. The "Bucephale"'s crew and officers numbered a hundred and twenty men that night at sundown, and of all those we had every reason to think he was the sole survivor.

I was about to tell him in return something of my own story, and of the animals having deserted the island that night at about the same moment when his ship was dashed upon it. But my story was cut short at the beginning by a repetition of that horrible rumbling noise, this time louder than before, and accompanied by a sensible jarring of the earth underneath our feet. Obeying the first impulse as before, I dashed out into the darkness, calling upon the Frenchman to follow. But the poor fellow, being wrapped up in blankets instead of his regular clothing, did not move quickly; and I had hardly gone two yards from the house when another shock, three times as heavy, set the earth rocking and quaking, and the shanty was thrown and fell with a crash to the ground, burying the unfortunate man in the wreck.

Another swinging and rocking movement as it seemed of the whole island threw me off my feet, and I was again struggling in an icy bath, for a moment completely overwhelmed. I struck out with my feet, but touched no bottom, and rising to the surface, my hand touched something which proved to be the hatch of the French ship floating close at my side. Here indeed was a life-preserver which might give me a temporary respite from death. Throwing my breast upon it, and seizing one of the rings, I clung desperately to the little raft, and tossed about in the angry sea, floating I

knew not where. Pieces of the wood-work of the shanty floated near me, but I neither saw nor heard anything of poor Jerome Regnier, who had been reapited from death just long enough to tell his story and explain the fate of the corvette.

It was plain enough that under the operation of volcanic changes the low part of the island had been completely submerged. But the higher and more rocky part had as yet undergone no change, and there away aloft stretched the horrible Phantom, as if gazing down, cold and stern, upon its dreadful work of human sacrifice.

Chilled to my very bones, I closed my eyes in the exhaustion of despair, feeling inclined to court death rather than to attempt further efforts, though I still clung instinctively to the iron ring which I had clutched in my left hand. But just then a rumbling explosion, which seemed to mount from the depths of the ocean up to the heights of heaven, sent the top of the pinnacle into the air, and a jet of flame shot skyward from the Phantom's head, illuminating sea and sky and all around where until now all had been in Egyptian darkness. The volume of flame increased, and showers of rocky fragments thrown up by the giant forces within were to be seen falling with loud hissing and splashing into the sea around.

I had not yet lost the instinct of self-preservation, for I found myself seizing upon a small piece of board, a fragment of my house, which was floating near, and used it as a paddle to force my raft further away from the immediate danger of destruction. But that strange fascination of which I have before spoken appeared to keep my eyes riveted upon the summit of the peak whence the flames issued. Soon a mass of rock tumbled away from a point a little way down from the top, or as it might be expressed, just above the shoulders of the Phantom, making a new opening out of which another stream of fire issued.

The effect was to my half-crazed senses more horrible than ever, for the monster, no longer sombre and stern in the gloom, but ghastly in the weird light, at once launching flaming missiles from the crown of his head and exhaling fiery breath from his mouth, had the appearance of holding high carnival over the graves of those who lay buried at his feet. I shuddered again as I thought of my six shipmates in the

cavern, and of the six score French mariners resting in watery graves. I closed my eyes upon the bright glare, turned them away seaward, and opened them upon—a ship!

Yes, my own ship, the “Diogenes,” her white sails plainly visible in the horrible light! I stood up on my little raft and made all sorts of frantic signals with my paddle. I knew the very instant when I was discovered by those on board, for I saw them rush to lower away a boat, but I knew little more until some hours after I found myself comfortably stowed in my own bunk on board the old whaler. I recalled my wandering senses, and went on deck to join my shipmates; but no island was in sight, nothing but the vast gloomy expanse of sky and water. We sailed over and over the spot yesterday occupied by Phantom Island. Where it had been submerged the ocean had a different hue, a tint of green merging with the darker color of the great deep, but there was no breaker, and our sounding-line

failed to reach the bottom. A few fragments of the wrecked ship were met with, but nothing worth the delay of picking it up.

When I arrived home from that voyage I sent all this information with my sworn affidavit to the French Minister of Marine, and thus settled beyond a doubt the question concerning the fate of the long-missing corvette. Through this channel I was made known to a brother of poor Jérôme Regnier, and we exchanged letters. The hatch upon which I went to sea from Phantom Island when it sunk is still carefully preserved at my home, being the only remnant or relic of the ill-fated “Bucephale.” The island stood just long enough to destroy this noble ship with a hundred and twenty brave men, being itself in the very throes of death when the wreck occurred, and the one seaman who drifted ashore was indeed the only one left to tell the tale—literally to tell the tale, and nothing more.

"PHIL."

BY CLARA LE CLERQ.

NUMBER one hundred and seventy-five, Swallows' Rest, sir!" And the driver then opened the door of the carriage as he spoke.

"Humph! here at last; are we? My poor head could not have borne these rough streets much longer," muttered the occupant of the vehicle, as he gathered up a shawl, small portmanteau and several periodicals, and stepped upon the stone pavement.

"Bring my trunk as far as the balcony, driver, as I see no one stirring about the place," continued the gentleman, as he passed through the low, iron gate, which closed with a dull clang, and slowly passed up the neatly graveled walk.

As the gate closed with its grating sound, signs of life appeared in the house: the hall door was thrown open, and a tall, robust woman of about forty-five, appeared on the balcony and stood waiting the approach of the gentleman, who seemed in no way to hurry his languid movements.

In person, the gentleman was tall and slender, so slender for perfection of form or good health, face extremely pale, hair

and eyes a deep brown, while a heavy mustache of the same hue shaded a mouth as delicate and sensitive as a woman's.

"Glad to see you, sir; Mr. Thornton, I suppose!" exclaimed the lady in a cheerful voice, as she extended her hand and shook the long, slender white fingers vigorously. "Hope I see you improving: as you wrote that you had been suffering from a severe illness, and wished a quiet place in which to grow strong again. Well, right here you have it, sir! Walk in." And the stout lady grasped the portmanteau with one large, firm hand, and the shawl with the other.

"Come into the sitting-room, and rest; you look completely worn out. Phil! where is Phil now, I wonder? Never by when wanted, of course. P-h-i-l!" Again, louder and clearer than before. Still no answer to the summons.

"Here, rest in this large easy-chair, while I bring you a glass of cool water. Here comes Phil,—no, it's Hannah. Where has Phil made off to this morning, Hannah? Just let a whisper of a new boarder get wafted around on the breeze, and Phil's off

like a shot. Bring this gentleman a glass of cool water, and then tell John to carry his trunk and other articles up into the east room."

After a short rest in the pleasant sitting-room, Mrs. Meadows conducted her new boarder up to the pleasant east room, where, after looking around carefully to see that everything was in order, she turned to leave the room, enjoining it upon him to ring for anything he should need, and closed with,—

"If Phil's racket and jumping up and down stairs trouble you, just let me know, and I'll try to stop it; but then I can't exactly promise for true, for when Phil gets a stubborn fit on, all the world could not stop it until it runs its course!" and with that she closed the door and left Walter Thornton to repose.

"Well, I'll show the youngster whether I'll have him jumping up and down stairs, and distracting my poor, aching head. I had no idea there was a child in the place,—detestable creatures! If I had known it, 'Mrs. Meadows' private boarding-house, for invalids especially,' would never have registered Walter Thornton as one of its inmates!" And with that he crossed over to a neat, white lounge near the large east window, and settled his aching head upon its inviting pillows.

"This is pleasant, anyhow; I shall rest a while, then take a bath and feel like a new man."

By and by the white lids, with their deep, brown fringes, closed over the aching eyes, and Walter was just losing himself, his aches and his pains in a gentle slumber, when slam! went a door on the same side of the hall as his own room, and thump, hop, bump! went some object through the hall and down the stair-steps.

"Merciful heavens! What wild animal was that? My poor head! What a jar that was to my whole nervous system!"

And Walter Thornton started up, pressed his pale, thin hands to his throbbing temples, and gazed distractedly around. Then his ear caught the sound of two voices,—one in angry and earnest remonstrance, the other in sullen defiance.

"I don't care! let him take his aches and pains elsewhere. I reckon a body has got a right to do as they please in their own house!"

And with that he heard another door slam, and a merry voice whistling, "Thine eyes like the stars that are beaming."

After a while the voice grew fainter, and young Thornton lay there, thinking.

"With all his rowdyism the boy loves music; for no one could whistle like that without possessing a musical soul."

Tea-time came, but Mr. Thornton, feeling

too weak and weary to leave his room, sent word by the neat servant girl that he would be pleased to take his tea in his own room.

A pair of violet-hued eyes, which had been watching the door so eagerly, veiled a disappointed expression beneath their silky lashes, as a little form sprang up and arranged a dainty little tea-service, containing a tempting repast, upon a silver salver, and bade the waiting-girl carry it up to the sick gentleman, with the hope that the tea would ease his aching head.

Hannah placed the salver upon the light stand which she wheeled to the lounge, and stood respectfully by, awaiting further orders.

"How tempting it all looks! but I think this cup of tea will do me more good than all the rest."

And with this remark he raised the dainty china cup to his lips and quaffed quite a portion of the aromatic beverage.

"Good heavens!" and the cup fell with a crash, breaking into innumerable fragments, and Walter Thornton puffed and sputtered fearfully for the space of three minutes.

"Water, girl, water,—quick!"

And Hannah almost flew to the stand, and hastily returned with a goblet of water.

"Who prepared my tea?" and Walter Thornton gazed sternly into the alarmed and perplexed face of the astonished girl. "Who prepared this tea, I say? It was salted instead of sweetened, and I wish to know if it was done purposely."

"O sir, it must have been Mrs. Meadows' Phil; no one else would have dared do such a thing. Now I remember, a message was sent with the supper,—'the hope that the tea would ease your aching head.' O sir, Mrs. Meadows will be so sorry."

And Hannah stood tremblingly by as if she, indeed, were the culprit.

"Remove these things, and request your mistress to come here."

Poor Mrs. Meadows! how distressed she was. And how humbly she promised that in the future she would arrange the tea with her own hands.

"Though Phil can do so much better in such things than I can, but it's just like some of Phil's wild pranks. Let this stubborn fit wear off, Mr. Thornton, and then the house will be quiet, I can assure you. These spells never last very long, not more than a week, anyway."

"A week! Merciful Heaven! can I stand this a week? Send the incorrigible Phil off."

"Send Phil off? Why, the house and everything in it is Phil's, and I am only aunt and housekeeper. And then, too, school will soon close, and Phil could not miss the examination on any account. I

am sorry, sir, very sorry; and I shall do all I can to procure quiet for you."

"Very well, madam, if I am not left in peace from now until tomorrow morning, I shall certainly look out for another boarding-place, where no noisy Phils are to be found."

And politely waving his hand toward the door, he dismissed the landlady with a short good-night; but ere the door closed after her ample form, he heard a smothered laugh, and then Mrs. Meadows' voice, stern and rebuking, —

"How could you, Phil? Poor young man; and he so sick and nervous, too. It is a crying shame!"

"Well, cry, then, I shall not;" and then the owner of the voice seemed to hop on one foot the length of the hall, and again slam went a door and all was still. But for how long?

Five, ten minutes, and with a muttered ejaculation of relief, Walter Thornton sank back upon his pillows, clasped his hands over his aching head, and tried to woo sleep and rest once more. But no, — the burning lids refused to close over the weary, aching eyes; his temples throbbed, and his whole body seemed filled with aches and shooting pains.

"Oh, I wish I had remained in the city; the journey and worry I have been through today will, I fear, cause a relapse. Ah, what was that? There it is again!"

And this time there was no doubt as to what the sound was. The loud scrape, scrape of the bow across a violin, and the twang of the strings as some one made ready this new instrument of torture.

"A fiddle, by the gods! Surely, surely I am possessed of a devil!" moaned the young man as the lively notes of "Money Musk," "Old Mollie Hare," and various and sundry other airs, all mingled into one grand (?) medley, racked his tortured brain. In vain he rang his bell, in vain he pounded on the wall; nothing could be heard above the harsh notes of the violin. Louder, faster, now up, now down, "Arkansas Traveler" with the rest.

At length the maddened brain and throbbing, quivering nerves, could bear no more. Rising from his couch and staggering blindly toward the door, he threw it open and attempted to call for help. He tottered, threw out his hands wildly to save himself from falling; but all in vain; he swayed to and fro like a drunken man, shivered as with an ague, and fell, striking his head against the sharp facing of the door. The blood gushed from the wound and from his nose, and he lay like one dead, — as the inmates, roused by his fall, hastened to his assistance.

Tears fell like rain from one pair of eyes,

and two small hands were wrung in grief and self-reproach, as a voice choked with sobs cried out, —

"O Auntie Meadows, your Phil has killed him! I have killed him, and all with my ungovernable temper and insufferable obstinacy. Go for a physician, quick, John!"

The voice was commanding, and brooked of no delay.

Phil passed both hands beneath the sufferer's head, and assisted Auntie Meadows, Jane and Hannah in placing him on the bed.

"Go to your room, Phil. I hope you are satisfied with this one day's mischief," said Mrs. Meadows sternly, as she sponged the matted hair from the broad, white brow, all covered with crimson stains.

"Oh, let me stay, only let me stay till the doctor comes! I'll — I'll be so quiet; and if I go to my room all alone I shall see his white face and poor, bleeding head, all night; do let me stay?"

"You poor, silly child, I don't believe you are half so mean as you pretend; you only act so for contrariness. Here, hold this bowl of ice water for me, while I sponge his hands. There, he seems to be recovering. Ah, how do you feel, sir?"

"Where am I? Who is this?"
He gazed into one beautiful face bent so pityingly above him. Tears swam in violet-hued eyes, and lovely flossy tresses were scattered over a snowy muslin.

"Ah, this must be heaven, and this my guardian angel come to protect me from that awful, incorrigible Phil."

With that the "guardian angel" blushed celestial rosy red, cast down the starry eyes, and beat a hasty retreat to the door, where she met the old family physician just entering.

Two hours later, as the white-haired old gentleman closed the door noiselessly behind him, and started to cross the hall, a small figure crouching in the dusky shadows rose up, and, placing a cold and trembling hand upon the doctor's arm, whispered brokenly, —

"O Dr. Strong, will he die? I did it all! It has been one of my wicked days, and I have behaved so badly!"

"Hush, hush! my child. The young gentleman is very ill, I'll admit; but if you will only be good and quiet we shall pull him through all right, never fear. He was not strong enough to travel in the first place, and the noise and bustle of the journey had a tendency to shake his nervous system, which greatly needs strengthening. He has been doing too much mental work of some description, and the journey, your racket, and salted tea, have done the rest; let us hope that your Saul's day is over just at present, and that you will be good and quiet,

and help auntie nurse our patient well and strong again."

And with that the little figure vanished amid the shadows of the hall, and the old doctor carefully descended the stairs, giving utterance to several emphatic "humphs!" while on his way down.

"Phil's word is as good as a bond." How often Mrs. Meadows had repeated that expression since she had been Phil's housekeeper. So when Phil had told her with penitent tears that "Saul's spirit" was exorcised, Mrs. Meadows knew she had nothing more to fear.

For two long weeks Walter Thornton lay upon his bed, often having visions of a golden-haired, violet-eyed fairy, or angel, he could not decide which. And by and by he began to wait and watch for his gentle nurse, and fret if he did not find her. Another circumstance he also began to notice, that after he was pronounced out of danger the tiny form no longer hovered over his pillow during the day, but after the shaded lamp was lighted, the blinds closed for the night, a soft rustle, no one else could have detected it, but Walter's perceptions were very quick where his little nurse was concerned, a hand fair and soft as a snow-flake would rest for a moment upon his brown curls, as a voice, tremulous with feeling, would question, —

"Are you really better tonight?"

And often through the still hours would he wake to find that gentle nurse with some cooling beverage ready for him, and after drinking from the cup held by that small hand, the head would be gently placed upon the pillow, the lamp moved to a distant nook, lest some gleam of light should disturb the invalid, and, while Jane or Hannah slumbered in the huge arm-chair, the night would pass away.

Days passed, and Walter Thornton was moved from the bed to the lounge. Dr. Strong pronounced that he would be able to leave his room in a day or two.

During all these days no mention had been made of "that incorrigible Phil," but Walter did not doubt but that he had been banished from the house during his alarming illness, and feared and dreaded now each day to hear the old slam of the doors, and the hop, thump, bump, upon the stairs.

"If ever I do lay my eyes on that youngster, I shall take him to task as the sole cause of all my sufferings. But if I had not suffered perhaps I should never have known her, my little violet-eyed darling! And to think I have never found out her name in all this time. But I will ask her tonight. She knows my name, for once when I was so very sick, and quite unconscious, as they all thought, that little one knelt here alone by my bed, and, clasping

my hands, bedewed them with her tears as she murmured, 'O Walter, Walter! do not die! Oh, if you should die! my poor, poor Walter!' Oh, how my heart thrills at the remembrance of those precious words, my bonny, blue-eyed darling!"

A knock at the door, and Hannah entered with, —

"Mrs. Meadows' compliments, sir, and here are some tickets for the college exercises, and do you think you can venture out? The graduating exercises will come off the twenty-first, and this is the nineteenth."

"Well, really, I can't say. I will talk to Mrs. Meadows and the young lady about it."

"But, please, sir, Mrs. Meadows said as how all the young ladies were so busy preparing for the grand night, that our young miss could not be spared from rehearsal to-night, and 't was young miss sent these with her best wishes that you would try to be present."

"Return my thanks to both ladies, and tell them I will try to go out."

The next morning he made his way slowly down the stairs, and found Hannah at the foot, just starting up with his breakfast.

"No, Hannah, I shall try to take my meals with the family today and tomorrow, so that I may be able to go out tomorrow night."

"Very well, sir," and Hannah then opened a door on the left of the hall, and announced, —

"Mr. Thornton, ma'am."

Kind Mrs. Meadows arose, and bustled about to insure the comfort of her invalid. A pair of bright, starry eyes were raised to his for one moment, and a gentle voice bade him "good-morning" in a very demure and ladylike manner, while the owner of said eyes and voice completed the folding of the napkin, slipped it through its massive silver ring; and then, with a gentle inclination of the golden-tressed head, quietly left the room.

Poor Thornton! All his visions of a heavenly banquet, with his blue-eyed angel opposite, vanished, as Hannah and Mrs. Meadows both bustled about the table intent upon making a comfortable breakfast for their patient.

"Now, Mr. Thornton, if you don't eat more than that you will not be able to go out tomorrow night to hear the young ladies read and sing. Now Phil has even gone so far as to hire a carriage, — though 't is only a step from here to the college, — but Phil said" —

"Excuse me, Mrs. Meadows, I wish to hear of no remarks made by that incorrigible Phil!"

And with that Walter Thornton pushed back his plate with its dainty, almost un-

touched breakfast, and stalked, with all the dignity his weak limbs possessed, out of the dining-room, through the hall, and slowly climbed the stairs to his own room, which he did not leave again that day.

If the truth must be told, he was afraid of meeting that awful Phil, and, in his weak state, he felt that the very sight of the boy would cause him to relapse. So there he remained, lolling upon the lounge. Once he took a book from the table, one from which she had been reading aloud to him only three evenings ago. How his fingers lingered over the pages which her rosy palms had kissed. "Dear, sweet voice, how I wish I could hear you now," he murmured, as he pressed the book to his lips. In doing this, the leaves fluttered apart at the title-page, and there, in a clear, round hand he saw written "Phil Bentley."

Down went the book with this disgusted comment:—

"Pshaw! That great lubberly boy's property! I wonder what he does with a book like this? Mrs. Browning, indeed! Never read a line in it, I'll wager; better *Headless Horseman*, *Osceola*, or some blood-and-thunder story, to suit his royal highness."

The vast hall was all ablaze with light and beauty, and delicate perfumes were wafted hither and thither, as dresses were adjusted, heads turned, or fans fluttered. Mrs. Meadows conducted our invalid to a reserved seat, not very far from the rostrum, and very near to an open window, through which came the fresh night breeze.

"Phil had these reserved for us," she whispered in an energetic manner, as she settled her ample skirts around her, and unfurled her fan.

But Walter did not heed her; his eyes were riveted upon the stage; and there his hungry heart and eyes found food sufficient in feasting upon that sweet face, so much fairer, so much more beautiful than all others.

The exercises opened, and all attention was directed toward the performers. Where was his programme? One was handed him as he entered, but now he could not find it. Misplaced, of course. Should he ask Mrs. Meadows for hers? no, he would not appear so anxious; wait and see. But if he only had a programme!

At last his patience could endure no more, and, turning, he asked Mrs. Meadows for her programme "only for a moment."

"La, I am sorry, but I dropped mine only a few steps back, and did not like to trouble you to pick it up. Now I know all of the girls, and can tell you their names, for our Phil says"—

"Excuse me, Mrs. Meadows, I will not

trouble you, and, besides, we are interrupting the exercises."

Five, six, seven young ladies had been called forward, and each one had merited much praise, both in composition, and manner in which it had been delivered, and still his dainty darling remained at her place. How like a veritable angel she looked to love's eyes, this evening.

A cloud-like dress floated about the fairy form; pearls gleamed amid the golden, floppy tresses, about the delicate, snowy throat, and upon the fair, rounded arms. A simple cluster of pure, fragrant violets, and moss buds nestled amid the foamy lace at the bosom, held in place by a glittering diamond star.

At last, — *The History of a Woman's Heart*, by Miss Phillippa Bentley, — and the fairy form arose, clasping the fair white pages of her essay in the daintily kidded hands.

Breathlessly Walter Thornton watched every movement, caught every word that fell from those rosy lips, and all the while "Phil, Phil, Philippa Bentley,—ye gods! what a fool I have been!" kept pumping and jumping through his excited brain at such a fearful rate that he was fearful of a relapse then and there, for he had at last met that "incorrigible Phil" face to face. How her clear, flute-like voice rose and fell, filling the vast hall as with sweetest music.

Not a sound broke the stillness. His eyes could not turn from that fair, sweet face; and, as the last words died away, and with a graceful bow she turned to resume her place with her classmates, such a storm of bouquets fell upon the stage that the fair girl seemed crowned with fragrant offerings.

Mechanically he unfasted the tiny cluster of violets and moss buds that graced his evening suit, and cast his tiny offering with the rest. She stooped, gathered that fragrant heart-gift from amid the gorgeous clusters about her, raised it gently to her lips, and without raising those violet eyes, now humid with pearly drops, she resumed her place. Once again, and only once, she appeared and sang. Ah! where had he heard that sweet air before?

"Thine eyes, like the stars that are beaming,
Have entered the depths of my soul."

Ah, Walter, you could have sworn that the sweet eyes met your ardent, impassioned gaze for one heavenly second, and then the song continued to its close.

He felt that he could not remain there much longer; and as soon as the venerable, noble-looking president had conferred the degrees and also the first honor of the class, the handsome gold medal accompanying the diploma, upon "Phillippa Bentley," with a

muttered apology to Mrs. Meadows, of which she could only distinguish the words, "heat, faint, home," he hastily left the hall.

He reached the house, entered the dimly lighted sitting-room, and threw himself into an easy-chair concealed within the bay-window, and gave himself up to thoughts; strange, tumultuous, they crowded upon his mind.

By and by he heard voices, — Mrs. Meadows and the one he loved so well. Again the voice of Mrs. Meadows as they stepped upon the balcony.

"He has gone to his room, I reckon. Poor fellow! the heat and exertion of going out proved too much for him. Go into the sitting-room, Phil, and I'll have Hannah bring in some iced lemonade and cake; and also send some up to Mr. Thornton's room."

The door opened, a form in misty white draperies floated into the room, and approached the window, in the shadow of which reclined our poor, distracted Walter Thornton.

"I am glad it is all over," murmured the sweet voice. "I wonder how he liked it? My precious Walter!"

"O Phil, darling! how could you?" And ere she knew it two arms were about the shadowy white dress, clasping the tiny form which it inclosed. For one delicious moment he held her thus, then the little form drew away modestly, and the sweet voice said, —

"How could I do what?"

"Why, deceive me so."

"Deceive you so! Pray explain yourself."

"Why, I — I — the fact is, I thought all this time that Phil was some great half-grown boy, and I have been treasuring up such a terrible reckoning with him. And to know that my precious little nurse, my

violet-eyed darling, and Phil are one, — 't is something almost incredible!"

"Are you sorry?" and the sweet mouth quivered like a child's. "I so feared you would never like me, and when you spoke so often of that 'awful, incorrigible Phil,' and called me your 'guardian angel,' I begged Auntie Meadows never to mention the hated name in your presence. Oh, can you forgive me? I was so hateful! I saw you coming up the walk that first morning, so pale, so languid, and you raised your dear brown eyes just one moment, — but ah, they entered my soul. But I vowed you should never know; and then I let Saul have full possession of me that day; but ah, never, no, never again, shall Saul possess me, for I have found my David to exorcise the evil spirit and keep it away."

And two trembling little hands were placed upon his arm, and two rose-bud lips, with their childish quiver, were raised to his.

What could he do?

What he did do was this: —

The little hands were unclasped from his arm, and clasped about his neck, while his arms held her closely to his fast-trobbing, happy heart; and his lips kissed the quiver away from the twin rosebuds, as he murmured, —

"My Phil, my darling, you are all I want; my own now and forever."

And thus Mrs. Meadows found them as she bustled in with, —

"Phil, Mr. Thornton is not in his room. I fear he was not able to reach the house. I — O-h!"

What a prolonged "Oh!" it was, to be sure. And Walter Thornton threw back his haughty head and laughed such a clear, mellow, happy laugh, to which "that incorrigible Phil" joined her flute-like, merry peal.

PLAIN PETER STUBBS.

BY CONSTANCE STERLING.

"But, mother, his name is enough to set any girl against him. Fancy my being Mrs. Peter Stubbs!"

And I laughed aloud as I pronounced the name I thought so hideous.

"Can he help his name?" queried mother. "It is a Bible name, as well as yours, Esther."

Stubbs a Bible name!" I exclaimed. "Well, I confess that is news to me. I'll get the Bible, and look it up at once."

"You know very well that I mean the name of Peter, not Stubbs," said mother, growing just a little angry.

"I might possibly put up with the Peter, but the Stubbs is just a little too much. What were his parents thinking of when they named him? They should have given him a handsome Christian-name to compensate for his being obliged to be a Stubbs all his life long. But plain Peter Stubbs! Ugh!"

"If you thought more of the farm that he owns, his horses and cattle, barns and stables, and less of his name, you would show more sense, Esther," said my sister Matilda. "I think, myself, that it would sound better if his name was Herbert or Reginald; but since it is not, and your chances for entering the blessed state of

matrimony in Hooksville will be few and far between in the future, as they have been in the past, and considering our poor circumstances, I think the sooner you consent to be Mrs. Peter Stubbs, the better it will be."

"Sensible advice, as usual, Matilda," said mother approvingly. "There is no nonsense about you. I only wish Esther had half your sense, or that Peter had offered himself to you instead of to her."

"You may both talk until doomsday," I said rather hotly; "but you will never get me to even think of marrying plain Peter Stubbs."

This ended the argument for the time being; but neither mother nor Matilda left a stone unturned to convince me how foolish I was to reject the hand and heart of plain Peter Stubbs.

The man himself was not my ideal, by any means; but still I liked Peter very much. He had been my knight ever since I wore bib-aprons and short skirts; and though I had, figuratively speaking, trampled him under my feet on all occasions, laughed at his awkwardness, and ridiculed his name, I still liked Peter very much indeed. But liking is not loving, as I found out when one June morning, when I was

eighteen, and Peter twenty-three, he proposed to marry me, and make me mistress of the large, handsome farm he owned just four miles from Hooksville. I rejected him flatly; though I confess my heart did ache just a little when I saw his eyes grow sad, and a grayish shade settle on his pleasant face.

But he kept on coming to our house to see me; and now it was July, and I had just received a letter from him, in which he asked me, for the second time, to become his wife. I showed it to Matilda, and that led to the argument with which I began my story.

When I went to bed that night, I lay awake, and thought it all over. I imagined how Susan Lake and Annie Parker would laugh at me, and recall all I had ever said about Peter Stubbs to my mind, and how they would ridicule anew his name, if I accepted him; and how horrible it would be to me to hear myself called "Mrs. Peter Stubbs" wherever I went. Then I had always in my air-castles seen myself the wife of some rich, dark-eyed youth, whose voice should fall like music on my ear, whose hands should be long, slender, and marvelously white (Peter's were fat and sunburned), and who should be named Reginald de Vere, or Harold Fitz Laurence, or something else just as high-sounding and aristocratic. And how could I come down to being Mrs. Peter Stubbs? No: I would n't marry Peter, no matter what arguments mother and Matilda might use to convince me it was best.

It was quite true, what Matilda had said about my chances of matrimony in Hooksville. There were only about twenty eligible young men in the whole place; and these Susan Lake, Annie Parker, and I used to laugh at, mimicking John Carter's squint, and David Hopper's leer, and making fun of all indiscriminately. I felt quite sure that I should never marry any one in Hooksville, or meet my ideal within its borders. Peter Stubbs was really the finest young man we knew; and, beside being well off, was kind-hearted, and possessed of a better education than most young farmers receive. If I rejected Peter, I rejected my last chance in Hookville; but reject him I did, and the poor fellow came to the house no more.

Mother and Matilda had little patience with me after my second refusal, and, if we

were ever "scrimped" in anything, took care to tell me that if I had married Peter I could have had every wish gratified; and so often did I hear his name that I hated it more than ever, and, when I saw the owner in church, turned my head away, and smiled when I bowed to John Carter, or gave the rose in my belt to David Hopper, in spite of knowing how reproachful Peter's blue eyes grew, for he knew as well as I did that I cared not a jot for either of those sandy-haired, freckle-faced young men.

I was very glad when in September came a letter from my old grandmother in Catesville, asking me to come there and stay with her all winter. She said she was getting more feeble every day, and needed some one to care for her, as her niece, Harriet Blessinghold, was to be married in a few days, and move away. Harriet was fully forty years of age, I knew; and, as I read that she was about to be married, the foolish thought came up in my heart, that if she, at that advanced age, could find a suitable husband in Catesville, what might not I at eighteen do?

So I went to Catesville with a very contented spirit, and grandmother gave me Harriet's old room. I was very glad to be away from home, and from the constant iteration of the name of Peter Stubbs. I sincerely hoped that in Catesville I might find my ideal, and then in triumph exhibit him to mother and Matilda, and forever extinguish all the hopes and aspirations of poor Peter Stubbs.

Mother wrote to me very seldom; Matilda, once every three weeks. Matilda's second letter after my arrival in Catesville contained the following item of news about Peter Stubbs:—

"His mother died five days ago, and I am sure I don't know what Peter is going to do now. He is all alone in that big, handsome house, with only the two servants. Annie Parker said, at the funeral, that he would have to get married now, whether he wanted to or not; and I know that either she or Susan Lake would just jump at the chance of being Mrs. Peter Stubbs, in spite of the way they have made fun of his name. But I do hope Peter will have more sense than to marry one of those foolish, empty-headed girls."

When I laid the letter down, I remained

plunged in a revelry for at least fifteen minutes. I was thinking of Peter Stubbs. How he had loved his poor old mother! I could imagine him sitting at his lonely meals, and having no one at all to welcome his coming, or speed his going. I verily believe, that if Peter had walked in at that moment, and asked me to marry him, I should have said "Yes," so sorry did I feel for him in his loneliness and sadness.

But he did n't walk in; and the next day something happened which drove all thought of him out of my foolish brain.

I was walking down High Street late in the evening, bound on an errand for grandmother. I carried my purse in one hand, and in the other my umbrella, for it looked like rain.

"Miss," said a voice right behind me, startling me terribly, "you have lost your handkerchief."

"I turned quickly, to see a young man holding out a dainty hemstitched handkerchief to me, bowing profoundly as he did so.

"It is not mine," was my stammered reply.

How could my voice be fluent when looking into my own eyes were the eyes of my cherished ideal, and in my ears sounded the musical voice I had fancied yet never before heard?

"Are you quite sure it is not yours?" questioned the soft, mellow voice very politely.

"Yes, sir, quite sure," I managed to say.

He made me another low bow, and then walked away, as if reluctant to leave my presence.

How "my heart went pit-a-pat" as I hurried on down the street to the store for which I was bound! My mind was so taken up with the image of the Adonis who had just spoken to me, that I could with difficulty remember what articles grandmother wanted.

When I left the store, laden with parcels, I found, to my dismay, that it was raining quite fast. I was hesitating what to do, for my hands were too full to permit of my raising my umbrella.

"Will you permit me to hold my umbrella over you? I see you are quite incapacitated for holding your own," said the musical voice of my ideal; and there he was by my side, holding his large, silk um-

brella over me, and walking by me until we reached my grandmother's house, which was only a short distance from the store.

I spoke but little during our walk, for I felt confused and shy, but my companion made up for my silence, for before we parted I had learned that he was the son of a wealthy banker in a distant city, and was only in Catesville on business for a short time.

"I am so lonely here," he said, as he held my hand at parting, "I know absolutely no one. Will you, can you allow me to call on you just once? I should so enjoy it. I know we are congenial spirits. You have only an old grandmother, you say, and I am sure there will be no objections made. Let us dispense with the empty form called an introduction."

I blushinglly gave him permission to call, feeling very guilty as I did so, and he put in my hand his card, on which I read the name of "Flor-ntine De Veign."

"I am partly French," he said, as he saw me read his name.

"Oh, I knew that," I replied. "Your black hair and eyes and—and"—I stammered, ran in the house and shut the door after me.

I did not tell my grandmother of my adventure of course. I knew she would not approve of my giving permission to a total stranger to call. I was in a fever of impatience all the next day, and at night dressed myself in my best alpaca, and sat in the parlor with my crochet. At eight o'clock the bell rang, and he came. Grandmother had gone to bed, and knew nothing of it, and the housemaid simply said as she opened the parlor door that a gentleman wanted to see me. The girl thought of course that it was some gentleman whose acquaintance I had made at the house of some friend.

We spent a delightful evening. At least it was delightful to me. And the next evening he came again. I then told grandmother that I had met Mr. De Veign when I was "out," and she asked no more questions. For she understood that I meant when I had been invited out to some neighbor's. She thought little of his coming to see me so often, being more taken up with her rheumatism and weak eyes than with my lovers or visitors. She kept her room almost all the time, and was unaware how frequently my dark-eyed ideal called on me.

When I had known him three weeks he offered himself to me. He pleaded as an excuse for this haste that he must return to his home, having been repeatedly summoned thence by his father. I was so infatuated with him that I said at once that I would marry him.

I told grandmother of our engagement; and Florentine had an interview with the old lady, promising to bring her letters which would show her who and what he was, and what an excellent match it would be for me.

I was very proud to be able to write to mother and Matilda about my engagement. I had been hardly ten weeks in Catesville and was already engaged to the handsome son of a wealthy banker. "Is n't it better to be the wife of Florentine De Veign, than of your plain Peter Stubbs?" I asked, and Matilda wrote back that she was very glad I was so well satisfied, and that Annie Parker had just married David Hopper, and Susan Lake was engaged to John Carter.

"They will envy me," I thought, "when they see my handsome, raven-haired Florentine. How can they marry those freckle-faced young men? To think I ever thought of debated marrying Peter Stubbs."

A couple of days later, Florentine and I were in the parlor. He was telling me that he must return the next evening, to his father, but that as soon as he had arranged for our marriage, he would come back to Catesville and take me home to my mother and sister and make their acquaintance. While he talked, he was pulling at my watch-chain. All at once a link broke in it.

He immediately unfastened both watch and chain.

"I will take this and get it mended for you," he said, "I am so sorry I broke it. And, Esther, will you let me have your initials engraved on the watch? Let me have 'E. De V.' put on, dear?" and he smiled.

I was too infatuated with the man to protest against it, and he rose to go in a few minutes.

"Esther," he said, as he kissed me good-night, "I dislike to ask a favor of you, Love, but could you let me have fifty dollars? I expected a check from father today, but it did not come. If it comes tomorrow I can pay you back before I leave for home, and if not, I will send it to you in my first

letter. I actually need the money or I should not ask for it, and such matters are nothing between such congenial souls as we are, Love."

"Don't mention it, Florentine," I begged. "I can lend it to you, and you can pay me back at any time."

I ran up-stairs to my room to get the money. I had just sixty dollars, the savings of the ten weeks I had been with grandmother. She was very generous to me, and I had no occasion to spend my money, so was saving it for my wedding *trousseau*. How glad I was that I could oblige my beloved Florentine in anything!

He kissed me ardently as I gave him the money, and thus, promising to be up early the next day to see me, he left the house.

But though I waited impatiently all the next day, my ideal lover did not make his appearance. Nor did he come the next day or the day after. Then I became uneasy, and sent the servant to inquire for him at the boarding-house where he had been staying. She returned with the information that Mr. De Veign had left there owing a heavy board bill, and had taken all his belongings with him.

Well, it was the last I heard from my ideal. I never saw him again, nor did I ever see either my watch or money again. Three weeks later a gentleman in Catesville told me that he had been discovered to be a regular "black leg" and swindler, and went from town to town making love to young girls and possessing himself of watches and trinkets on the plea of getting their initials engraved on them.

For six weeks longer I staid with grandmother, hiding my mortification as well as I might, and then I made up my mind to return home. I did not write to either mother or Matilda that I was coming, but set off one February day for Hooksville. As I rode along in the cars my mind was full of my troubles, and I could not help contrasting plain Peter Stubbs with the elegant Florentine, much to the latter's disadvantage. I felt weary and heart-sick, and wondered if people in Hooksville would stare at me, and how Peter Stubbs would treat me. Did he really care for me? Would he love me now? I thought of Peter until I persuaded myself that I really loved him dearly, and, after all, his name was n't so very bad. There were many worse names than that of Peter Stubbs.

We stopped at a station just as I thought this, and I heard a girl's voice in a house near by, singing, —

"Young men's vows are soon forgotten,
So, pretty maid, don't be too bold,
Ripest apples soonest rotten,
Hottest love the soonest cold."

A chill came over me as the train moved on. Had Peter's love for me grown cold? Had his vows of everlasting love been forgotten? Matilda had never mentioned his name in her letters since she had written of the death of his mother.

The first familiar face I saw in Hooksville was that of Peter Stubbs. He was standing on the platform at the railway station. He seemed ever so glad to see me, and said he had his buggy and horses near by, and would drive me to my mother's house.

As the distance to our humble cottage was over a mile, I was only too glad to accept his kind offer, and we were soon driving along the hard, frozen road. I did not object at all to being tucked up in buffalo robes by the side of my quondam lover, and a thrill passed through my heart as I reflected that I had refused the privilege of riding behind this handsome span forever. Perhaps I could undo the mischief, and Peter was certainly very attentive now, and I felt sure he had not ceased to care for me. Mother and Matilda would not taunt me with my engagement to a swindler if I could introduce Peter to them as my future husband.

"You have not forgotten the nice rides we used to take last summer, Peter?" I said rather nervously.

"No, Esther. We used to have some pleasant times," he replied.

"You always were a dear friend, and a good one, Peter," I ventured.

"Yet not dear enough for a husband, Esther? Well, well, all that is in the past, Esther. I don't mind it now.

"Times a'n't now as they used to was been, Folks don't do now as they used to did then,"

he quoted presently, turning his laughing blue eyes on me.

I remained silent. Had he then forgotten? The song I had heard that girl sing at the station came into my mind. Yes, young men's vows were indeed soon forgotten.

"Of course Matilda has told you the whole story," he said, after a short silence.

"What story?" I asked.

"Do you not know that Matilda and I are to be married next week?" he asked in surprise. "Why, I thought to be sure she had told you all about it. It is so, anyhow. I think she will make me a good wife. After you went away I began to call on her occasionally, and, with you away, had a good opportunity to study her character, and from respecting and esteeming her I soon grew to love her dearly. I was in doubt whether she would have me, since I had once offered myself to you, her own sister, but she said she did n't care for that at all. I've had three of the rooms at the farm re-furnished expressly for her, and I know I shall be so comfortable and happy when I am married at last."

I was Matilda's only bridesmaid, and very pretty she looked all in white, with orange-blossoms on her head, and a bunch at her neck. Peter looked proud and happy, and almost handsome, and I could n't help a sigh escaping my lips as I thought of how I had thrown aside as worthless his generous, noble heart.

Years have gone by since then, and no other lover has come to woo. It was as Matilda said: "There were few matrimonial chances in Hooksville." Mother and I live alone in our little cottage, but pay frequent visits to the Farm, always returning home laden with fruit and other farm products, and of all the men I know the one I respect and esteem most highly is my sister Matilda's husband, plain Peter Stubbs.

"POOR POLLY!"

BY CORA CHESTER.

"Ah me! but I think in this life of ours the bitter outweighs the sweet"

The boys of Poverty Court called her "Poor Polly," not because she was more impecunious than her miserable neighbors, but on account of her pitifully lonely condition. She was neither young nor pretty, this heroine of mine; would not have pleased the eye of a connoisseur with her irregular features, pale complexion and small figure; but when the veil shall be lifted from all hearts, I have no doubt such few women who have been sent to this world of sin to show us how they can suffer without complaint, can endure patiently hunger, want and misery, and master terrible temptations where many a man would fall—such patient noble women will wear a diviner beauty in the eyes of God, than the silk-robed angels of earth who give almost grudgingly from their own abundance, and reap here the reward of their ostentatious charity.

I will tell you her story and let you judge. She had lived in Poverty Court ever since she could remember. She had had no happy childhood. No pleasant memories brightened her dreams of the past. Life had been one long, long struggle. Cold biting winters, with insufficient clothing and fuel; intense burning summers, spent in the midst of baking walls and streets, with an attic room for a home—life meant simply this for her, existence merely a keeping of body and soul together.

To do this in that overcrowded city she must often work far into the night. If she had been a woman of spirit she no doubt would have contrasted her lot with that of her more favored sisters, and have grown bitter and cynical in consequence; have questioned the justice of Heaven, and even the existence of a God. Could it be possible, she would have asked, that a Father of infinite compassion and love would suffer his children to endure starvation and death, when abundance and plenty were revelling a few doors off?

In her meekness she never doubted; endured suffering and scorn as a token of

God's love; and submitted cheerfully to his will.

It was a glorious winter night, as Polly, bundle in hand, wended her way homeward, and bright windows, gay with garlands of holly, told of a Christmas season near at hand. Polly lingered in the crowded thoroughfare. She shrank somehow more than usual from the coarse oaths and drunken jeers of Poverty Court.

The sleighbells tinkled in the frosty air, richly-clad people jostled against her as she walked, and, looking upwards, she could see myriads of bright stars studding the blue heavens, telling of infinite worlds and glorious possibilities beyond the crimes and stains of this.

She was thinking of the Star of the East, that in those early days heralded the birth of a little child, when a sharp sobbing voice in the crowd attracted her attention. She sprang forward just in time to save a mite of humanity from being thrown down beneath the feet of some trampling horses.

A tardy guardian of the peace hurried up and grasped the little one rather roughly by the shoulder. His grasp relaxed as his hand touched the heavy fur and velvet of the boy's cloak.

"Take yer hands off, will yer?" screamed the boy's shrill voice. "I'll tell pa, I will. Jest let go and take me straight home!"

"Yes, yes, my little man," laughed the policeman. "Where might yer home be, now?"

"O, it's a far, far ways. I ran from cook this morning, and I didn't cry till jest now. My pa's name is Jones, and mine is Alexander De Vol Jones."

"What is yer pa's first name? and what might he be a-fer doing for a living, now?" with a sly wink at Polly.

"He haint got no first name. I call him 'pa.' Pete says 'Massa Jones,' and Jinks he just says 'Jones,' and," with a superb air of scorn, "he don't do nothing for a living but drive horses."

"O, a coachman, maybe. Well, come on to the station-house and I'll inquire."

The boy's courage in the meantime had

evidently been diminishing, and he listened with curling lip. At the word station-house he set up a perfect yowl of terror, and, clinging to Polly's skirts, implored her to save him.

So Polly comforted him as best she could, gave her name and address to the policeman, and promised to either look up his home or take him to the station-house early in the morning.

In the directory she consulted there were legions of Joneses. She looked especially at the minor army of Alexander Joneses. There were brokers, bankers, bakers, and hosts of others bearing the distinguished patronymic, but only two cabmen. One resided in Poverty Court, and taking the child's hand in her own, Polly started for home.

Alexander Jones, cabman, knew nothing of the boy, and slammed the door in Polly's face before he shouted an answer to her question.

Alexander, Jr., had seated himself upon the wooden steps, and had grown strangely quiet. Bending down, Polly saw that the white lids had closed over the saucy eyes, and that the poor tired child was asleep. He was a heavy boy, but she hardly felt the burden, as she lifted him in her slight arms and toiled down the street.

No one was about the door of her home, nor on the dark landing, and she made the tour of the three flights in safety and silence, only pausing now and then to take breath and rest.

At last the little room was reached. Master Alexander supped royally off bread and milk, was bathed and arrayed in Polly's long nightdress. She laughed at his vain efforts to fight his way out of the white muslin with his chubby feet and fists, went into raptures over his long yellow curls, and kissed the fair neck and shoulders, although he protested most manfully against any such tenderness.

Sitting in her low chair, she held the tired boy in her arms and sang him to sleep.

"Wake me up before Santa Claus comes," he sighed, before resigning himself to the inevitable. "He comes jest afore twelve, you know."

The clock struck eleven, but still she sat there in the cold dark room. She could not lay the child down and seek her own bed. Thoughts of the boy, and fears that he might never find his parents, filled her

mind. Perhaps he was a deserted child, with no mother, no home, and might grow up ignorant of his birth. A tear fell upon the golden curls at the thought. Polly knew so well the bitterness of it all.

A rap at the door, but Polly heard not. Alexander sighed in his sleep, clasped a chubby arm about Polly's neck, and she, to reassure him, sang in a clear sweet voice a Christmas hymn. The door opened gently, and a figure stood there, its owner taking in one swift glance the poverty of the place, the lonely little woman singing in that loud glad tone, and the pretty boy, with his golden head half hidden on the small shoulder.

Polly finished her song, and feeling a presence in the room, turned around.

"Pardon me, madam," said a kind voice. "You did not hear me rap. I could not wait—I was anxious—My darling!"

This was very disconnected, but there was no need to explain further. The strange gentleman had almost taken Alexander and Polly both in his arms, but he evidently intended the former only as the object of his tenderness, and Polly, slightly blushing, resigned her charge.

He stood there talking a parent's nonsense to his sleeping boy, at last laid him tenderly on Polly's bed, and walked to the window where she was standing.

"I will not try to thank you, madam," he said, in a husky voice. "You have saved my boy from a horrible fate, and words are weak. I learned of the incident at the station-house, also your address. Pardon me if I offend. I see that you are not rich, and if—"

He could not finish. Something in the bright brown eyes stopped him.

"It was nothing, sir, nothing but common humanity." Then, with a glance at his elegant appearance—he had evidently hurried from some evening entertainment—she laughed just a little.

"Well," he inquired, with a perceptible smile, "what is it?"

"I was thinking of your son's description of your business. He said that you drove horses for a living, so we looked for all the cabmen and cartmen in town by the name of Jones."

"You must have spent an eternity in the search," he laughed. "Alexander is a goose. I drive bargains, not horses, for a living. In fact, my horses are my recrea-

tion. My poor boy must think that I make hard work of my pleasures."

Polly knew so little of recreation or pleasure that she did not feel qualified to reply, so she remained silent. He read something of her thoughts perhaps in the small pinched face and pitiful mouth. Her evident youth struck him also for the first time.

"I see you are young, child. In the dark I took you for much older. I thought that only a grown woman could bear with my boy and care for him as you were doing."

Polly blushed now, and drew herself to her fullest height. Then, with simple dignity:

"Your first impression was right, sir. I am a grown woman. My age is twenty-six."

He turned away to conceal a smile. How many of his fashionable lady friends, he wondered, would have made a similar confession had they possessed her youthful form and face?

"Well, I will admit that I am glad," he said. "I am old myself."

He was barely thirty-five, but his dark hair was already silvered.

"And yet," he continued, in a more mournful tone, "I would not willingly live over even one year of my life. Wasted years they have been, full of folly, anguish and regrets. Should I be given another trial, I should probably be as great a fool!"

He had forgotten Polly, and was walking hurriedly up and down the room again. Alexander awoke with a peevish cry and called for water. Polly was beside him in a moment. He drank the water, but looked at his father with a vacant stare. The blue eyes were very bright, and a burning spot was on either cheek. Polly's heart sank within her.

"Santa Claus haint come," he whispered, "and it's time. Christmas has been and gone, and it's summer now. I can sail my boat, and shoot birds, and—"

His mind was evidently wandering. Mr. Jones seized his hat and hurriedly left the room.

After that many were the hours and days those two spent together in the sick room. Polly was the readier and more skillful nurse, but the father proved an apt pupil, and his voice took a gentler tone, and his step grew softer, as he performed little services for his boy. Polly's sewing lay un-

finished in her basket, but she never thought of the future. They watched together by the sick bed until the danger was over. A morning dawned at last when Alexander opened his eyes, lisped "papa," and, turning on his pillow, fell into a peaceful sleep. That evening a carriage came into Poverty Court, a most unusual sight, and Mr. Jones, Master Alexander Jones and Polly, to whom the latter clung with tiresome tenacity, entered it and were driven away.

Then, in a handsome uptown boarding-house, followed a brief dream of happiness for Polly, who, as Alexander's governess, accompanied that young gentleman upon drives, walks, and sometimes to evening amusements. It all seemed to her like a fleeting dream of luxury.

Happiness made her comely, almost pretty, and this happiness, to her so new and strange, was due to something she dared not confess even to herself.

She was self-distrustful and humble, and her secret, had she told it, would have seemed to her almost sacrilegious. She never knew what her starved life had lacked until one summer evening a wealth of love and devotion was offered at her feet.

"Polly," said Alexander's father, "I have lived alone many years now. My life, God knows, has been most sad and hard to bear. In my blindness I have hated and dared to doubt all women, but one little woman has come to me who is capable of self-sacrifice and devotion. She has grown very precious, very dear to me. Do you think, Polly, she will trust me without knowing my past? That past has been cursed. Have I not deserved that the curse should be removed?"

Polly heard not this last question. She only read the trouble and anguish in his eyes. Her intense love, realized for the first time, almost overcame her. It was idolatry that she felt as she raised his hand to her lips, only desiring to bestow comfort on the loved one, and hot tears fell from her eyes.

"Tears shed for me?" he murmured. "They will atone. Surely they will wash my past and make me worthy."

Then the slight form was gathered to his heart, and kisses were pressed upon her forehead. They were oblivious of past or future, of everything but each other and their love.

One evening, about a week after this, he

came in strangely excited. He clasped her in his arms, and kissed her again and again.

"Say again that you love me, Polly. Say, as you did once, that without me you would not care to live!"

So Polly, looking into his eyes, and, in her blindness, finding all the happiness there she deemed she would ever care for, whispered as he desired:

"I could not live without you. If you leave me death will be sweet. I pray for that before separation!"

"Hear her!" he exclaimed, triumphantly, as if to an invisible adversary. "Did I not know she would say so? We will be married at once, Polly; at once, and leave this horrid city forever. Where is Alexander? He must be in readiness to leave with us. We must all leave to-night."

Polly, in her love, thought nothing of his eagerness then, and so there was a quiet wedding that evening in the rectory a few doors off. Amid scenes of foreign travel she forgot her past life, or remembered it only as if it were a dream of pain.

Sometimes these memories would rise and reproach her, and she would see that her life was empty and useless.

One Sunday evening, as she sat with an open Bible in her hand, these words met her eye and stung her with a strange remorse: "Have ye suffered so many things in vain?"

The question seemed addressed to her, and written in letters of fire. Had her past sufferings been in vain? What had she done, now that her life was overflowing with happiness, to aid the forsaken ones she remembered so well in her past? She was revelling in wealth, love and happiness—and they? They had been deceived, forsaken, perhaps may have loved once. Not as she loved; she did not deem that possible; but still they may have loved, and have been cruelly wronged and treacherously dealt with. She closed her eyes and prayed that she might yet devote a portion of her life and wealth to aiding the unfortunate ones of earth. Loud angry voices interrupted her thoughts.

"I say I shall see her! I know you keep her here. I haven't followed you way from New York for nothing. It's a burning shame, Alexander Jones, and you know it. I'll have revenge! I'll tell—"

Another scuffle outside, then Polly's door flew open, and a figure stood there that she never forgot to her dying day.

A tall, gray-haired, fierce-looking woman, haggard, hollow-eyed and hideous, but with a defiant brilliant eye and an incongruous richness of toilet.

Alexander Jones held her back in his powerful arms, but when he saw Polly sitting there so white and still, he loosened his grasp and sank motionless upon the sofa, with his head buried in his hands. Polly stared, then stammered:

"What is the matter, Aleck? Who are you?" in a vague uncertain way to the hard-featured woman, who had also seated herself, and was gazing insolently at her pallid-looking victim. No pity was visible in her coarse sensual face.

"Yes, I waited to hear you ask that. Who am I? I'm Alexander Jones's wife, that's what I am. I'll spare your feelings and not ask you the same question. But I know what you are. You are a—"

Before the vile words could leave her mouth she was out of the door and down the stairs, but Polly never noted. Soon a weary step reascended the stairs, and the man she had loved so well stood before her. She had never moved since those cruel words, but sat still and cold, staring straight before her.

"Don't look so, Polly, don't!" gasped the man. "You'll drive me mad! O Polly, let me die here! Curse me, kill me, but don't look at me like that!"

"Is it true, Aleck, her words? What did she say? Tell me it is false. Of course I know it is, but tell me."

He was ready with a lie, but his eyes fell beneath those pure ones, and noted the look between the trembling fingers.

"O, Heaven help me, I can't, I can't! Polly, don't hate me! When I asked you to marry me I thought her dead. I never dreamed of wronging you. I will swear it on the book you hold. I loved you so well, so well."

"Did you know it when you married me?" asked the sad accusing voice.

It had not yet broken down with a realizing sense of her terrible position.

"Yes, I— Polly, I knew it that night. I couldn't give you up. No power on earth could have torn you from me. What, would they have had me give up my life for a virtuous notion? Love is stronger than that, darling. You are more to me now than my hopes of heaven."

He would have taken her in his arms,

but with a sob she escaped him. Down the long stairs she flew—out into the night—away, away, she cared not where.

She laughed a bitter laugh as men jeered her on the streets. They were not mistaken. Was she not as low as any of the fallen creatures about her? Some one followed and touched her. That aroused and frightened her. With a cry she bounded down the narrow street, and took refuge within a church portal. There the sexton found her the next morning, senseless and nearly dead. She awoke in a hospital, to find kind faces bending over her. She had been tenderly nursed and cared for by the Sisters of Mercy. They listened to her pitiful story and believed it. They taught her that her only hope of happiness lay in an utter sacrifice of self, and so she followed in their footsteps, nursed and cared for the sick in the wards of that hospital for many weary months, and was at her post when a terrible plague broke out in the hot Italian city.

One night she was called to the bedside of a newly-arrived patient. She gave one look at the changed swollen face, then uttered a cry of agony and fell upon the bed. What matter to her if contagion reigned there? Death would be too welcome to her. She forgot her present life. She kissed the lips and forehead of the sick man again and again; and he, opening his eyes and seeing her there, murmured with a radiant smile:

"Thank God! he has heard my prayer.

Polly, I don't mind dying now. Dying means being with you always; living, only a bitter separation. I don't care for heaven as I do for you, Polly!"

"O, don't say so, Aleck, don't!" whispered Polly, frightened at his idolatry. "I can't save you. My love has not proved mighty enough. There is a love that is more than satisfying, that can cleanse and save. Pray, darling, pray, for death is very near!"

Then, seeing that he was fast sinking into unconsciousness:

"Pray, for *my* sake, Aleck!"

"For your sake I pray God to forgive the bitter wrong I did you. Do *you* forgive me, darling?"

"Yes, yes," sobbed Polly. "I forgave long, long ago. Don't think of *me* now."

She held his hand, and kneeling there prayed for his salvation far into the night, prayed after his spirit had fled.

In the morning, when they came to the dead man's bed, a silent black figure still knelt there. They turned the pale face to the light, but the faint smile of perfect peace never left the sad mouth.

A Sister of Mercy had merely died at her post during the plague from over-exertion and exposure. So they, in their faith, said "that it was well," and buried her hurriedly, as all were buried in that dreadful time, by the dead man's side.

His words had proved true. Death had united where life would have separated them.

POSSIBILITIES.

CALDOR, M T

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POSSIBILITIES.

BY M. T. CALDOR.

"WHAT a beautiful and yet what a solemn thought!" said Aunt Mellicent, lowering her book, and looking over to her only companion in the lovely little breakfast-parlor of an aristocratic house on — Avenue.

"What did you say, auntie? I really believe I did not catch the meaning of a single word," rather listlessly returned Florence Craydocke, the queenly young girl who reclined languidly in the satin-cushioned arm-chair by the window, with a book in her lap also, but with white hands crossed idly over its closed covers.

"I noticed that your thoughts were wandering in dreamland all through breakfast-time, my dear Florry. I cannot declare it a very wicked, but I do believe it is a dangerous practice. Come, now, let me give you this sentiment for healthy considera-

tion. See what this author says: 'Once every day in every life some grand and noble possibility touches us lightly on the shoulder. Those who have open eyes and pure hearts see and hear, and follow the leading out into some issue that sooner or later returns a glorified fruitage. But the most of us are blind, or lost in selfish dreams, and never know that the waiting angel stood beckoning to us.' What do you think of it, my dear?"

"It is a charmingly poetical idea; but do you think it was written for this prosaic age of ours? I am afraid part of us are so wrapt in money-getting, and the rest so giddy with money-spending, that we do not give any angel the chance to touch us," answered Florence, with a little sigh.

And then the two ladies each fell into a profound revery, and not another word was

spoken until the waiting-girl put her head into the room to say:

"If you please, Miss Florence, the girl has come with some sewing of yours. Will you come and see if it is right?"

Florence rose up promptly, and in shaking out the silken flounces of her pretty dress made also a graceful little gesture with one white hand across her forehead, as if brushing off a cobweb there as well. This was the unspoken thought:

"What an insensible creature I must be! I have never felt that angel possibility's touch on my shoulder. I am sure I never have."

She was a bright earnest girl of quick impulses and tender sympathies, nevertheless. And so she came lightly into the waiting-room to the sewing-girl who sat there—such a grave still figure in her gray hat and worn waterproof! The latter's eye brightened as if a sunbeam had glinted into it; and she could not forbear a faint smile, she was always so touched by anything beautiful, this simple little Jenny Dorr. And Florence Craydocke looked like some being of another and more radiant sphere to her, standing there in her lovely flowing blue dress, with its dainty lace ruffles, with her bright untroubled eyes, her peach-bloom tinted cheeks, and the little sparkling adornments of chain and locket, bracelet and ring, scintillating here and there.

I think something of this involuntary admiration showed itself, even in Jenny Dorr's meek respectful glance, when she presented the bundle of fine needlework; for I must confess the time had been when Florence had come and gone, as if it were merely an automaton machine that brought and carried work for her, without a single thought of the human heart craving and aching, or rejoicing and hoping, beneath.

To-day she smiled graciously, and was lovelier than ever under the smile, and the humble little sewing-girl watched her furtively, and enjoyed it as she would have enjoyed a picture or a play, if her forlorn experience gave her chance to look at either.

"You have done the work very nicely," said Florence, graciously, while she bent her graceful head down a moment to examine the work. "I think I must try if you can copy a Paris pattern that I like very much. Would your mind coming up stairs with me to my chamber? I will show it to you there."

Would she mind, indeed? It was like a glimpse into fairy-land for beauty-worshipping Jenny to pass through the handsome house whose velvet-covered floors yielded only noiseless tread; to see the glistening silken draperies overhung with lace mists, like sunset clouds behind a fountain's spray; to catch a wondrous confused tableau of pictured walls, and flower-decked tables, and gleaming statuary, and all the while be following the stately princess who was so much at home amidst all this grandeur, which dazzled and awed her simple companion's eyes.

The Paris garment was brought forth out of a drawer, breathing forth delicate fragrance from a nest of carved woods that seemed marvels of rare workmanship. Jenny hardly dared touch it with the tips of her fingers, but the young mistress gave it a careless shake, as she asked:

"Do you think now you could make another like it if I got the materials for you? I tried everywhere to match it, and could not, and should be so pleased to have a pair."

"The yoke is not very difficult, and I understand the stitch. Yes, miss, I believe I could," answered Jenny. "Leastwise, I am sure I should be proud to try."

Florence laughed lightly.

"I'll pay you liberally, but I don't know as there's any cause to be proud about it, unless because you are so skillful with your needle."

"I wasn't thinking of that," answered Jenny, quickly; "indeed, only of the pleasure to make anything to come here—into that drawer—for you to wear."

Florence smiled again. This was a compliment that pleased her; those she listened to at the ball last night wearied her, and seemed to have no meaning.

"You like my room, do you? you think it pretty?"

"Pretty!" echoed Jenny; and this time there was a hungry thrill in the honest voice. "I couldn't imagine a queen ever had anything so beautiful. And O how happy it must make you!"

Again her eye went roving over the tastefully furnished room in ecstatic admiration, and lingered fondly at the lace-hung toilet table, on which stood beside the ivory and silver knickknacks a tiny crystal vase, with a bunch of creamy roses and a single scarlet camellia in it.

Here Florence gave her first earnest look at the speaker. She had unfastened the worn shabby waterproof, and underneath a snowwhite linen collar and a tiny bit of bright ribbon showed. Her hair was satin smooth, her dress was clean and neat, but very much worn, and her face—why, if it were only rounded out, and the clear straightforward-looking brown eyes had not the dark circle beneath them, she would actually be pretty; and she was young, too, not a year older than she herself. A young girl with a taste—nay, evidently a passionate love—for pretty things, and poor, and compelled to spend all her time in making them for other people, with none to keep for herself.

"O dear me! O dear me!" exclaimed Florence Craydocke, piteously.

The other looked up in alarm.

"What is the matter? Are you sick? Shall I call any one?"

And then meeting the bewildered stare of those other lovely eyes, the sewing-girl colored as if she had been guilty of some misdemeanor.

Florence had seen the greedy look at the flowers. She rushed to the toilet and swept them out of the glass.

"My dear girl, would you like these? I'm sure you are fond of flowers. Do take them."

"O thank you! poor mother will enjoy them more than I shall. How bright they will make our poor room! and how fragrant if I put them near her pillow!"

Miss Craydocke was actually wringing those slender gem-decked fingers of hers.

"O," she gasped, "and I said I never had any angel possibilities! You have worked for me before? you have seen me before, haven't you?"

"Yes, miss; twice before you've paid me for work. I'm very thankful. Mrs. Graham recommended me, you know," answered Jenny, wondering a little what queer freak was upon the lovely lady.

Florence dragged out two chairs from the alcove. What a rich color was glowing on her cheeks! how her eyes shone!

"Sit down, sit down. Don't you want me for your friend—a real friend, you know, that you can tell everything to? I wish you'd tell me all about yourself."

Jenny's cheeks were crimson now, and she sat a moment turning the flowers slowly in her hands, and too dumfounded to think of a word to say in answer.

"I don't understand," she faltered, at last.

"Dear me! I'm so stupid at it. But you look so good, and wise, and patient, and I have just discovered you're only a girl like me. I do want to be a friend to you, and to help you—to all the beautiful things I can!" exclaimed Florence; and there was hearty earnestness in her voice.

What did Jenny Dorr do but burst into a great fit of weeping? "Such a ridiculous stupid creature as I was, right there before that splendid girl in that lovely room!" she said, afterward, to her mother.

But I am not sure she could have studied up a wiser move. The next moment Florence had both her hands, and was crying herself; and there were broken ejaculations, and comforting adjurations, and presently a steady flow of confidential talk, as if the pair had always been closest friends.

"O you blessed angel possibility! I'm sure I heard you this time, and I was never so happy in all my life," declared Florence, presently; while little Jenny was wiping her drenched eyes, and seeking to steady her tremulous hands.

"Come right into my wardrobe, you darling Jenny. There's half a dozen dresses, at least, that I shall never wear again, and you will make them look like new. Let me put you into one of them. And wouldn't you like the astrachan sack there? I have not thought of it these two years, since the sealskin and the sable supplanted it. And O, I do want to see you in that brown velvet hat with the red roses. The velvet is just the color of your eyes! Let them dance; don't fill them up with tears. We are going to be two happy girls, and good friends always."

"O, you are just like an angel!" sobbed Jenny. "I can't trust myself to believe it. Why, I was almost afraid to speak to you when you came in down there. But what will your aunt say? I'm so sorry you have not a mother!"

"I do as I please with my wardrobe. Papa sets me an allowance, and it's queer how I manage to spend it all, no matter how much he enlarges it. This year I'm positively instructed to keep within bounds. And you'll help me? O!"

This last was at a sudden remembrance, and she darted toward the case where hung a dainty jewelled watch.

"Bless me, how late it is! and I thought

the morning was going to drag horribly. I promised to go to Madame Y——'s opening of the Paris balldresses. She sent me word there was one of golden satin and black lace invented especially for me and the great party coming off next week. Wouldn't you like to come and see me dress?"

"O!" in a rapturous tone that spoke all Jenny's smothered delight at the very thought.

Miss Florence was flitting around the room like a demented creature, and talking all the time.

"Come, Jenry, do put on one of those dresses. I'm going to take you home in the carriage, and you'll wear the astrachan sack and the brown velvet hat, and we'll make a bundle of the rest. And we'll stop and buy some nice fruit for the sick mother, and something nice for Annie, the good little sister who takes care of the mother while you sew. And you are going to come here and sew in my room always when you work for me. And how pleasant it will all be!"

"To sit here among all these beautiful things, and hear you talk, and see you! O, what must I do to be good enough for all that!" quoth Jenny, and began to cry again.

"But you'll never be dressed. I'm aching to see how you'll look," suggested Florence, when she turned from the mirror, arrayed in the sealskin, with the dancing blue feathers of her own stylish hat kissing the peachy bloom of her cheek. "We ought to make nice foils for each other. And I declare, everything I've got that is not quite right for me, will be just the most becoming thing in the world for you, with your brown eyes and dark hair. And that is grand, isn't it? We'll wear everything up clean, and auntie can't look into the crowded closets and shake that wise head of hers any more."

"I wish you would tell her," pleaded Jenny. "I'm half afraid to put them on without."

At which Florence pulled lustily at the bell, and the moment Aunt Mellicent appeared, she cried, gayly:

"I've felt both hands on my shoulders, aunty. O the blessed possibility! I tell you it's just gospel truth; we only want to open our eyes, and here it stands."

Jenny opened her eyes as if the lovely lady had spoken Greek; but Aunt Melli-

cent glanced quietly around, and comprehended all. She smiled benignantly.

"I don't believe I shall have any more languid peevish dreamers in the house, my dear," was all her comment. "And while you are giving Thomas his instructions, I'll hear the story from its heroine."

And Jenny Dorr rode on the seat opposite Miss Craydocke in the handsome carriage, and now and then surreptitiously pinched her arm under the warm astrachan, to make sure it was no dream.

The lovely Florence was fairly dazzling in her beauty, with those glad smiles chasing the dimples around her red lips in one perpetual hide-and-seek. So thought a very elegant-looking gentleman, it was plain to see, who came eagerly forward to greet her as the pair entered Madame Y——'s handsome parlors.

"Ah, Miss Craydocke, are you also drawn into the maelstrom? I brought my mother here an hour ago, and she has been invisible ever since. What marvellous mysteries are ranged here! Do you know I saw something that made me think of you? an inspiration wafted from Paris solely on your account."

Jenny, hanging in the background, saw the rich color deepen on Miss Craydocke's cheek while she returned his salutation, and thought, "That is the prince for my princess, I am sure."

"What is it? a golden satin under black lace?" she asked, gayly.

"Exactly, with such wondrously pure water-lilies to loop the misty sheen. I fancied Miss Elliott looked at it longingly, but I heard madame tell her it was half engaged."

"Allie Elliott here, too! Then I ought to hasten. Madame sent me word about the dress. It must be suited, if you both declare it meant for me. Come, Jenny, you must help me decide."

Florence led the way into the inner room. Yes, the balldress was an inspiration, a poetic dream woven into satin and lace, whispering of golden sunshine, and hazy nightfall, and blossoming lilies out of summer lakes.

"O!" exclaimed Jenny, hardly daring to breathe. "The water-lily couldn't be more above common weeds than you would be peerless among women in that dress. Miss Craydocke, with just one lily in your hair, and—"

"Pearls around my throat and arms. Yes, I see. Madame, what is the treasure marked? How much will papa have to pay for it?"

Simple Jenny was aghast, and even the extravagant Miss Craydocke was staggered by the price named.

"You see it is such a rare combination of exquisite art, and the lace is very fine. And from Worth's, besides. It will be quite the gem of the season," said madame, artfully. "Miss Elliott is waiting to know if she can have it. I told her it was partially bespoken."

Florence Craydocke was rolling a flying ribbon slowly around her finger; her eyes strayed lovingly toward the exquisite dress which he had said was made for her alone, and then they came back to Jenny Dorr's sober face.

They had made their flying call, be it known, to the poor, bleak, scantily-furnished upper room in which this one family of helpless Dorr women lived, and Florence had been cogitating numberless benevolent plans ever since. But now this costly temptation confronted her.

"Well," said madame, a little chillingly. The imperial dame was not used to hesitation of this sort from such customers as Miss Craydocke.

"It is a charming creation. I quite envy the wearer," began Florence; and then there went one bright flash over her face, and the lovely eyes came out of their cloud steadfast and clear. "But I am going to practise a little economy, by way of change. You may give Allie Elliott her wish, madame. I really must deny myself. Come, Jenny, let us fly from temptation."

Passing through the parlors again, they saw the prince in animated conversation with a very handsome young lady. Somehow, without knowing any more about any of them, Jenny Dorr understood that these were rival candidates, and that the prince was at that point when a trifle turns the scale on either side. Women intuitively read these things, though with but half an eye.

"She is very handsome," thought Jenny, "but I don't believe she is one half so good as my young lady. But then, how should he know that? The other only shows him the sweet side, it's likely."

Florence had walked toward them with a smile that was a little forced. It was a trial

to give up that dress, at this time, to Allie Elliott. She was forced to admit that. But she would not skirnish, nor give herself time to retract, and said, abruptly:

"Madame fancied that dress was engaged to me, Allie, but I can't be so extravagant this time, though it is a sore temptation."

"Then I have the next claim. How pleased I am! I was quite vexed to lose it. O Mr. Armitage, you said you meant to implore the golden water-lily dress for half a dozen dances, and that is the very one," laughed Allie Elliott.

Florence colored faintly, and turned away.

"Come, Jenny Dorr," she said; and bowing hastily, did not wait to hear any parting words.

When they reached the carriage it was found that Florence had left her muff.

"Let me run up for it," cried Jenny, eagerly, and did not wait for an answer, but hurried up again to the parlors. Muff in hand, she passed the handsome young gentleman, who was standing alone now by a table, and was just taking up a newspaper.

A sudden daring thought came to her, and she wheeled around.

"If you please, sir," she said, hastily, covered with blushes at her daring, "I'd like you to know what Miss Craydocke never means to tell. She's giving up the beautiful balldress to make a poor family comfortable and happy for a good year. If you'll come to see my mother, she'll tell you about it. And we live at No. 12—Court, up stairs. Mrs. Dorr is the name, sir."

Without waiting to hear a word of answer, she turned and fled away; and Florence, who was a little thoughtful herself, did not question her about the confusion visible upon her face.

The next day the Dorrs were made jubilant by the arrival of sundry loads of furniture and groceries, and Jenny was like a wild creature at the addition of a pretty sitting-room, with another small chamber opening out of it, which Florence had secured from the landlady for their use.

"Hush!" said she, with a merry smile, when Jenny came to thank her, and could only cry. "Isn't it a small thing for one friend to do for another, just to forego a score or two of yards of satin and lace? You shall help me to retrim an old balldress, and next week neither papa nor I

would know the difference. Come, you shall choose you some ornaments for your sitting-room out of my chamber. I'm so glad we both love pretty things, Jenny; that will help our friendship along wonderfully."

"You're just a born angel," sobbed Jenny.

And Florence kissed her, and laughed more merrily than ever.

"I do believe the child has found just the true stimulus she needed to keep her from growing stale and self-wearied," observed Aunt Mellicent to Mr. Craydocks; "or else from whirling off into the giddy butterfly you and I both despise so much. The dear girl is enthusiastic enough over her protege, but don't you spoil it all by coming to her aid. Let her benevolence be bestowed out of her own sacrifices, if you want her to reap the blessing."

"Aunty, aunty, I want to read the rest of that book of yours," declared Florence, two months afterward, as she came to her aunt radiant with the smiles and tender blushes that were chasing over her face. "If the single scrap you read me proves such a wonderful prophecy, what must the rest be?"

Aunt Mellicent did not quite understand all she meant, but the reader may.

For the prince had just terminated a long interview, in which he related how a certain visit of his to a little family made glad and happy had so glorified the plain old dress at the ball, that the golden satin and lace, and even the wondrous water-lilies, faded before its charm. A more marvellous flower, that was half uncertain whether to bloom or wither away, had suddenly unfolded beneath the spell—the flower that is ever new and never old—the fragrant rose of Love. Would she condescend to wear it for his sake?

"Only, dear auntie," said Florence, again, softly, "I am afraid that the fruitage has come too soon to be deserved."

"What does the child mean?" queried Aunt Mellicent, in an injured tone.

Florence was twirling a shining ring on her forefinger—a new ring. Aunt Mellicent caught the shimmer of its solitaire gem, and a light broke over her face.

"Ah!" said she.

And "Ah yes!" returned Florence, blushing furiously.

A WILD-WOOD HORROR.

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**BY THEODORE ARNOLD.**  
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I HAVE had in my life adventures not a few; but here is one which I always before shrank from relating. Not that I am afraid, for the law would clear me, but because of a dread I have to think of a subject which always makes the flesh creep upon my bones. But I believe that if I once out with it, it will be like laying a ghost, and I shall not be so haunted. I warn the reader that I am going to put his credulity to the test, and that I have no sufficient explanation for the facts I relate; but I can say to him with the Dane:

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamed of in your philosophy."

To my story. Antony Guild and I made up our minds to spend our summer vacation of a fortnight in the woods. We were used to wild living, having told some thousands of miles in California, and we were a little tired of city life. So we packed our kits and started.

But before starting I went to see my little girl, Minnie Allston, and to take a good long look in her sweet face, provision against a fortnight's absence. Minnie and I were going

to be married some time or other, and I loved the very ground she walked on.

I had a thousand things to do, and could stay only a few minutes; but we crowded a world of sweetness into those, and,

"Pledging oft to meet again,
We tore ourselves asunder."

The next morning Antony and I started. We went on board a boat, took a twelve hours' steam trip, debarked at a little out-of-the-way port, plunged twenty-five miles straight up into the woods, and went to sleep the first thing when we got there. Tony got asleep first, though I was more tired than he. But, the fact was, I had something on my mind that kept sleep at bay. I kept saying to myself that I didn't believe anything and didn't care, but still I lay there and fretted, and thought it over, while Tony snored in the grass, with a blanket under his head and all sorts of bugs crawling and hopping over him. My trouble was this: Just as I was going on board the steamer, Dan Linn had stepped up to me and whispered in my ear.

"Look here, old fellow," he said, "I wouldn't go on a trip with Tony Guild."

"Why not?" I asked, in surprise; for Tony and I were the best of friends.

"He's a deceitful fellow, and somebody else is a deceitful girl," said my friend, mysteriously.

"Look here, you croaker, hurry up!" I said, impatiently. "There's the whistle."

"Well," whispered Dan, "after you left Minnie Allston last night, Tony went to see her, and it's my opinion that he's cutting you out. What is more, she expected him, for she said, 'I thought you would never come!' when he went into the parlor. The window was open, and I heard her. She was sitting there alone without a light.

The last whistle sounded, and I sprang on board the steamer where Tony awaited me, but my heart was not light. In spite of me, jealousy had begun to gnaw. Antony was handsomer and better off than I, and, at the time I just made the acquaintance of Minnie, had been paying her some attention. I cut him quite out, and though he pretended not to care, I always thought that he did care, and would like to serve me a turn if he could.

I waited in hopes that he would mention and explain his call, but he did not. I even spoke several times of Minnie, a thing I seldom did, in order to remind him; and all the satisfaction I got was to see a faint, significant smile just curve his lip. It set my blood on fire. Nothing but pride prevented me from demanding an explanation of him on the spot, or going straight back and demanding one of Minnie.

But I resolved to wait. Before he and I should get out of the bush I meant to know all, and if they had played me false—here I clenched my teeth and hands, and said nothing. But I am not a tame fellow, nor one easily frightened, and my silence didn't mean anything good for Tony Guild.

I lay there and thought the matter over, and as I thought, I writhed and groaned. I loved that girl like my life, and I had trusted her so. I had told her everything, all my adventures, my faults and repentance, and all my plans. I wouldn't have minded that so much, but I had opened my inmost heart to her. With her sweet face resting against my heart, and her tender, caressing hand put up to stroke lovingly my cheek when my voice faltered, I had told her all my dreams, and aspirations, and doubts, and hopes. Good heavens! had she been mocking me? I could not be-

lieve it. Dan Linn was a croaker, and as spiteful as Lucifer, and had probably made the story up. But then, Antony's significant smile? I writhed when I remembered it, and could scarcely keep from going and strangling him where he lay.

I didn't sleep much that night, and the next day felt more savage than any bear we had come to shoot. Tony didn't seem to mind, or indeed, seemed amused by it. Two or three times during the day he burst into a laugh without any apparent cause.

But my anger did not disturb my aim, and by night I had a good pile of game, twice as much as my companion.

"What in the world are we to do with three deer?" asked Tony; "and what do you want of all those rabbits?"

"I don't care what becomes of them," I answered, carelessly. "I took a notion to kill them."

"O! well, I don't mind, as long as you don't expect me to eat them all," he said, carelessly, as he struck a match to light the fire of twigs.

I threw myself down on the moss under an old pine tree, and let him get supper, as I had got breakfast. I watched him and noticed, not for the first time, the easy grace of his ways. He handled the wicked-looking, long-bladed knife as a lady handles her fan, and in ten minutes two slices of venison were cooking on sticks by the fire. A few drops of the sunset, red as blood, came through the tree-tops, and fell on him, on his black, crisped hair, and his fine, swarthy face, and the manly form as limber as a snake's. Why would not a woman love him? I couldn't stand it, and had to turn away, or I should have sprung at his throat.

We ate supper and went to bed, that is, spread our blankets and stretched ourselves on the ground, and in a few minutes I heard him snoring.

I lay on my back and looked up into the silent, starry skies, and it seemed that the large, bright stars were eyes looking down at me, full of meaning which they were trying to make me comprehend. The forest rustled all about us in the night breeze, and sometimes I heard the stealthy step of a wild beast prowling about.

A thought seemed to touch me by the elbow, as it were, a trifling thought trying to attract my attention, but scarcely worthy of it. Two or three times I had seen Tony press his hand to his heart and glance at me

with that mocking smile of his. I had taken it as a hint that he meant to intimate that my heart was troubled, but now a new idea struck me. How did I know but he carried there some *souvenir* of Minnie, some token, which, if I could get, would prove their falsehood?

On my own heart reposed a little lock of her sunny hair, and I had begged for a miniature, but had been told that she had not one finished, but that I should have one on my return.

I tried to drive the thought away, but could not. I didn't like to do anything underhand; but what will not a man do who is mad with jealousy? There is no truer saying than that "All's fair in love and war."

I looked once to where he lay asleep, and, presently, rose quietly and approached him. Circumstances favored me, for he lay on his back, with his breast exposed, and his shirt bosom half unbuttoned. Bending down, I got a glimpse of a blue ribbon round his neck. I caught my breath, for blue was Minnie's color. All hesitation was gone at the sight. I bent nearer and softly pulled the ribbon. It yielded, and a little miniature-case came out. I tried to see the face in the soft starlight, but could not. I felt as if all my blood was in my head and I was strangling, while I strained my eyes and tried to see that face. Then I struck a match and looked at the miniature a full minute. That done, I placed it softly back in the breast where I had found it, and crept feebly away to a brook that ran near. I felt sick, but hardly knew what ailed me. A great weakness had taken possession of me, and I thought I should die if I didn't get to the water.

I lay down in the brook, but the water was too shoal to drown me. It refreshed and cooled me, and made me realize clearly my own misery. For it was my Minnie's face that I had seen pictured there. There was no longer any hope.

I kept quiet and tried to collect my faculties. I would do nothing in haste. There was time enough. So I spared him that night. They should never come together, but I was not quite decided on what would be the greatest punishment for them.

The next day Antony looked at me in surprise. I was as gay as a cricket, and joked all day. "I'm glad you've come out of the dumps," he said. "You are something like yourself. Yesterday I was balancing in my own mind the advisability of going back to town and leaving you to live with your peers,

the bears. Besides, I've got something to tell you which may make you mad, and I want to have you begin good-natured, though you are likely to challenge me by the time I get through."

"O, your story will keep," I laughed. "I'm tired and sleepy, besides being confoundedly thirsty. Let's have some grog and turn in."

"All right!" he said, "I'll tell my story in the morning."

"You'll never tell me that story to gloat over my misery!" I thought; but I only laughed, and took the grog he mixed.

That drank, I mixed again, and yet again, but felt not the slightest effect from my potations, though I had drunk enough Scotch whiskey to knock any common man over, and the whole forest about seemed perfumed with creosote.

Tony stretched himself out and went to sleep, and for a while I lay and pretended to sleep. Then I rose softly up and looked at him. The moon had risen, and lay white on his sleeping face. He breathed peacefully, and as I looked, sighed softly. I turned away and waited. I could not strike him thus. I sat down and waited till the moonlight should be off his face. In shadow I could strike.

The shadow crept stealthily, as the moon moved, nearer and nearer his head. It blotted out the rank grass and clover, it touched the blanket under his head, it dimmed his black hair with a deeper blackness, and crept slowly, curl by curl, toward his forehead.

"Say farewell to the light!" I whispered, as the brow overclouded.

"Look your last!" I almost cried out, as the shadow stole over the closed eyelids.

Slowly, slowly it shut over him, and the face lay dim in the night. I went nearer again, and bending, raised my arm for the blow. But as I did so, his heart, where the moonlight still lay brightly, softly heaved with a low sigh.

I sank back again. I could not strike at a heart whose pulsations I could see. I sat down and waited again till the shadow should creep over his breast.

The leaves of the trees shivered in the night-breeze, and the air seemed full of whispers. My own heart seemed to chill, and my blood to curdle in my veins, as I watched the creeping shadow again. My eyes grew strained and wild to see its progress, and I fancied I could hear his heart beat out its last throbs.

At length I approached him again, the third time, and lifted my knife. But a thought held me back. He had a mother whose heart would break for him.

But what cared I? I had no mother, father, brother or sister, no kith nor kin, and Minnie had been my one treasure. He had basely robbed me of her. There on that breast, her head had rested—Good heavens! the thought steeled me. I raised my arm and struck.

He gave a sudden spring, and caught blindly at me. I struck again, my arm glancing on his, and the knife entered his temple. It stuck there, and as he sunk slowly and silently back, I had to give the blade a pull to draw it out.

I turned away from him with a feeling that all my blood had turned to fire. I didn't seem to touch the ground as I walked away, and there were sparks of fire before my eyes. I walked and walked, in what direction I knew not, only turning for motion. And at early daylight I came back.

There he lay dead, with blood on his heart, and that awful gaping wound in the side of his head. It made me sick to see. I always did hate to see a wound in the head. His face had a strange look, neither of calm nor of distress, but a vacant look more dreadful than either; and his dull eyes were wide open.

Something must be done with him, clearly. After a few moments' thought I went to work to scoop out a grave near by. The ground was full of roots, and my hands were not hard, and the grave was a shallow one. When it was dug I carried him to it, covering his wounded head from my sight, and lying him down, covered him smoothly over; then I went back and washed away all stains of blood from the place and my clothes. Finally, I hid down just after sunrise and went to sleep. It had been two nights since I had slept, and I was worn out.

It was night and starlight when I awoke, and for a few minutes I did not recollect what had happened. But in a little while it all rushed over me. With the consummation of my revenge all feelings of anger had gone, and I had only a heart full of bitterness and desolation. I remembered the sweetness that girl had made in my life, and the time seemed hundreds of years away. I remembered all her soft, pretty looks and ways, and my heart cried out for her. False as she was, I would have clasped her to my heart and forgiven her. Perhaps he had teased and coaxed her

away with his oily tongue, and maybe, now he was out of the way, she would love me best.

I was lying just where I had lain both nights before, under a pine tree opposite a poplar tree where Tony had made his bed. As I thought, I slowly raised myself up, and involuntarily glanced that way. Horrors! There he sat, upright, and staring at me. I could feel the dull glare of his eyes in the shadow, and they held mine as in a vice.

How long I sat there frozen I know not, but I never stirred till the moon rose, and then I shook with a slow shudder. It was bad enough, that dim image of him, but how could I see his face in the light!

The moon rose higher and touched the tree-tops. It crept slowly down the boughs toward that awful, stirless form, and caught finally on the topmost locks of his hair.

I tried to tear myself from the sight, but was bound as by countless cords, and could not stir hand nor foot. O, to escape the look of those eyes, and the sight of that awful gash in the temple! In vain! The pitiless moonlight, pale and still as fate, sunk slowly, and brought out the square, pale forehead, the dull eyes, the vacant face, and a horrible open mouth with bloody teeth and dropped jaw. But the wound was turned a little from me, and though I felt my hair stand up with horror, I was spared that sight. No, it was only delayed, for as I looked, the head slowly turned, the eyes still fixed on me, and my wild and shrinking eyes, unable to close, looked into that gaping pit in his head.

The very horror of the sight gave me a sort of courage, and broke the spell. I could not touch that form, but I sprang up and fled to the place where I had laid him. This apparition must be some nightmare fancy, and I should find the grass quiet and undisturbed.

But my faint hope died as I looked. The shallow mould was pushed away like the coverlid from an empty bed, and the grave was untenanted!

I fled on and wandered through the forest all night like one possessed. Wild beasts fled out of my way, and it seemed to me that the very trees shrank at my approach.

As I grew fatigued my excitement began to fade a little, and I tried to reason with myself. Perhaps I had not killed him, after all, and, reviving, he had broken out of his shallow grave, and came there to frighten me. Perhaps, again, he had been driven crazy by the wound and the terror, and did

not know what had happened to him. It would be an awkward thing if he should get well and go back with the story of my attempt on his life.

Beating my half numbed brains, I wandered all night, but, with the first streak of daylight, forced myself to go back. If he were living I would nurse him back to life and health, I resolved, and then challenge him to open fight to decide our claim to Minnie Allston. One of us must die, but it should be in fair fight.

As I came in sight of the grave I stopped, and my breath stopped at the same instant. It was covered and smooth as I had left it after burying him! I hurried past to the place of our encampment. Everything was as I had placed it, but under the poplar tree a bunch of clover leaves had their cups full of dark blood which slowly ran over and dropped into the grass beneath, running down the length of the blades till they looked like tiny knives just drawn from a heart.

I looked a moment, then sank down overcome with terror and remorse. I repented. I had struck him down in the midst of life and hope. What mattered it for me? I might have died, and done with it. Perhaps in the other world things would have got righted, and Minnie might have come to me there, who knows? Then, Tony had been a good friend to me, and had befriended me more than once. How could I blame him for stealing her? I had almost taken her out of his hands, and I would take her from any man's side at the altar, if I could get her. I repented. Poor Tony. That mute blood dripping from the clover leaves appealed more strongly to my heart than did anything else. I would go home and give myself up, and send some one to get his body.

Having made up my mind, I laid down and went to sleep with a sort of peace. I was utterly exhausted with fatigue and excitement, and slept soundly.

It was dark again when I awoke with a start, and in an instant realized my situation. I had meant to sleep only a few hours, and then travel toward a settlement in the afternoon. I shivered with fear, but, drawn by some horrible fascination, could not keep my eyes away. I looked, and there he was again! The same still, dim form, and the same awful moonlight creeping down toward it. It was all acted over again, but when the corpse slowly turned his head and let the light fall on that bloody gap, I shrieked aloud, and started up.

A hand grasped my shoulder and shook me violently. "Arnold! Arnold! wake up!" said a voice.

"I repent! I repent!" I cried, hiding my face. "I was mad with jealousy, or I would never have killed you, Tony. You knew how I loved her."

"Arnold, wake up!" said the voice again; and my shoulder was shaken yet more violently.

I took my hands away from my face and looked up. There stood Tony Guild over me, shaking me, and trying to beat some sense into me.

"You've had the night-mare, old fellow!" he said, giving me another shake. "You've been howling like a hyena."

"And you're not killed, Tony?" I cried, in incredulous delight.

"Not as I know of," he laughed.

"Thank God!" I said, fervently, sitting up. "I thought I had killed you."

"You drank a pint of Scotch whiskey," he answered, "and got as drunk as a pig. You came near being killed yourself."

"Is this only the second night since we came?" I asked, incredulously.

"Only the second night, you muddy-head," he replied.

I pressed my hands to my brow. "I have suffered four days and nights of agony," I said. "And, Tony, if I didn't kill you, I meant to. Did I dream also that I found Minnie's picture in your breast?"

"Let me tell you all," he said, eagerly. "I would never have tried to tease you, my dear boy, if I had known that it would strike so deep. I might have remembered that touching you was handling edged tools. Forgive me!"

"Tell me first what you mean," I said, sternly.

"Well, in the first place, this picture was meant for you," he said, taking it from his neck and putting it into my hands. "Minnie wanted it done to give you to bring along, but didn't want to promise you lest you might be disappointed. The last afternoon came and it was not quite done. She sent me a line telling me to go into the studio and get it and bring it to her to give you, as she did not wish to go out lest she should miss seeing you. I went and had to wait, and when I reached her house, you had gone."

"She gave it to me with a little note to give you. Here it is. You know I had no chance to speak to you till the boat started,

and then I saw Dan Linn talking to you. I had seen him skulking about the house when I went in to see Minnie the night before, and I knew in a moment what he was talking of. When you came aboard I saw that you were angry and jealous, and I determined to punish you. If you had got over it, I would have given them to you and explained, but I was determined not to do it till you were good-natured. I thought it too bad that you should suspect your friend, and the little girl that loves you better than she does her-life. Why, what do you suppose was her last greeting to me? 'Be sure, you take care of him!' she begged, with tears in her eyes. As though you were not able to take care of yourself!"

I put my hands over my face and burst into tears.

"It is I who am to blame, Arnold," said Tony, putting his arm around my shoulder with the tenderness of a woman. "I had no right to trifle with a man's most sacred feelings. Again I ask you to forgive me."

"And I forgive with all my heart," I said, grasping his hand, and, for an instant, forgetting even my darling.

"All's well that ends well," he laughed; but I saw him wipe his eyes as he laid down again.

BOTH SIDES OF A HEDGE.

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**BY N. P. DABLING.**  
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"WELL, Charlie, I had a double reason for inviting you and Tralee down to Thonetville at this particular time," said Sutledge, lighting a cigar, and seating himself at one of the windows of the smoking-room.

"Ah, indeed! I wonder what your reasons were?" Tralee asked, languidly, stretching himself on the lounge.

"Well, in the first place," began Sutledge, smiling, "I wanted you to see what a cosey little paradise I have, and the principal charm of the place, which, by the way, is Mrs. Sutledge, as you couldn't be at the wedding as I wished you to, and I wished to see you and talk over old times. Secondly, I—well, how shall I express it?"—Sutledge puffed vigorously at his cigar for a few minutes.—"Well, to come to the point (I don't like this beating around the bush), my wife has two very dear friends; and—"

"I haven't the slightest doubt of it," put in Charlie.

"Very particular friends, I mean."

"Who are they?" Tralee asked, opening one eye with a slight show of interest.

"That's just what I am going to tell you. One is Miss Clara Polten, and the other Minnie Nicobar, both of New York. Both extremely lovely,—I don't know which is the most so. Both are sensible and agreeable."

"Ah! I want to know."

"Well," continued Sutledge, not heeding the interruption, "we expect them here tomorrow to pay us a visit."

"Too bad!" moaned Rives.

"Why so?"

"We were going to have such a fine time fishing, weren't we, Tralee?"

"Yes, and the trout are so plenty in the streams hereabout, you said in your letter of invitation."

"Well, what's that to do with the ladies?" Sutledge inquired.

"Why, it will be expected that we shall do the agreeable to them. There'll be riding and walking, first to see the sun rise from the summit of some grand old mountain three or four miles off. Then we'll have to walk out to see the sun set; and then there'll be walks by moonlight, in the balmy air and night dews that always give me a touch of the rheumatism. Then I'll have to sing a duet with one of the ladies, while Charlie Rives is talking soft nonsense to the other. Well, I suppose the trout are safe for this season."

"I don't know about that," Sutledge said. "But I can remember a time, not long ago either, when you were not so averse to the society of ladies."

"No," answered Rives, "but Tralee and I have done nothing but flirt with the sweet creatures through the winter; and, to be plain about the matter, we wanted a change of programme. We came down to the country to rusticate."

"Well, I intended a change of programme. You've flirted long enough. Now get married, and you'll find it a very sensible, as well as agreeable change."

"Don't see it," muttered Tralee from the lounge.

"No, not yet. Can't think of binding myself to one woman for some years yet. Couldn't think of commencing courtship in earnest at present. When the woman comes along—she will sometime, of course—then I shall accept my destiny with meekness and resignation. No use in resisting fate. But, besides, you know I am wedded already—to poetry. I've a volume of poems nearly ready for the press now. Of course they are not all gems, and the first volume may not make the

name of Rives immortal; but the critics must needs deal leniently with me, for a gentleman in my circumstances to write anything, deserves great credit."

"So Byron thought. But will you get it? Saxe says:

" ' You may dream of poetical fame,
But your wishes may chance to miscarry—
The best way of sending one's name
To posterity, Charles, is to marry!
And here I am willing to own,
After soberly thinking upon it,
I'd very much rather be known
For a beautiful son, than a sonnet!'

"Those are my sentiments, too."

"It is well that we have not all the same desires and aspirations," Rives answered.

"But I say, Charlie, don't you think a pretty woman the very personification of poetry?"

"Of course she is," growled Tralee. "Poetry is nothing but moonshine—fancy—trash, and so is woman. Nothing real about her, not even her hair. Her cotton is real—high, though, I see from late quotations."

Sutledge laughed. "You are cynical, Tralee."

"One might imagine you'd been jilted. Did you make an offer of your hand and heart to the charming Miss Montrose before leaving the city? and did the haughty dame say 'No?'" asked Rives.

"I don't remember anything of the kind. I understood that Miss Montrose had about run through her fortune, and no doubt she would like to form an alliance that would replenish her purse. What a helpmeet she would be! I want a woman when I marry."

"And suppose the woman should be quite as particular about having a man?" asked Sutledge.

"Well, I know I've been a drone all my life. But I'm going to be something one of these days. I shall make a bold strike. One of these fine mornings I shall wake to find myself famous. Pass me one of those cigars, Charlie, if you please." And Tralee leaned back on the lounge and closed his eyes, as though the exertion of talking had quite exhausted him.

"Shall I smoke it for you?" Rives asked, passing him a cigar.

"No, thank you. By the way, you say the ladies arrive to-morrow?"

"We expect them on the one o'clock train," Sutledge answered.

Tralee smoked in silence. Perhaps the

thought of ladies' society wasn't so disagreeable to him, after all. There'd be a chance to make another conquest, perhaps. He was a handsome man, had a handsome form, and dressed with taste, always had abundance of small talk at his tongue's end, could sing a fair tenor, and dance with perfect grace, and was possessed of a large fortune left him by his father. He had rather extravagant tastes, perhaps, but he always lived within his income, so he could see no reason for making any exertion in the world. Trade was vulgar, and he was too indolent to study a profession. Still, he had a vague idea of making a bold strike one of these days, as he had said. What sort of a strike it would have puzzled him to have told. He was twenty-eight, and, for a wonder, had never once thought seriously of matrimony. He imagined that some designing woman (all women were designing in his eyes) would entrap him some day, though. Well, he would submit. There must be some bitter with the sweet. You see he had never been in love, never had had the faintest twinge of the grand passion. All women were the same to him—all fickle and frivolous, he thought. Never imagined that any sane woman could think of rejecting him should he make her an offer of marriage; thought that it might not be very disagreeable to have a wife and keep an establishment of his own, but he feared there would be too great a load of responsibility on his shoulders. Well, trouble would come soon enough—he would not borrow any.

Rives was something like his friend, except that he had much more energy of character. He might have been a useful man in the world if he had not, like his friend, had the misfortune to be wealthy. As he had said, he thought great credit was due to him for having done anything.

Tralee and Rives had been in college with Sutledge, and had graduated at the same time. The latter had studied law afterwards, and been admitted to the bar. Then he went to Thonetville, and opened an office. His first client was a certain Mr. Overton. He had a suit at law, and Sutledge took the case and gained his cause. He saw Miss Overton for the first time, in the court-house when he was making his plea to the jury. That night he was introduced to her; next, he found that he loved her and that she loved him; and the consequence was, they were married soon after. Tralee and Rives were in St. Louis at the time, so knew nothing of the wedding

until after it was over. Three months afterwards they received an invitation to visit the newly wedded pair at Thonetville. Rives thought Sutledge hadn't done bad in the selection of a wife.

"Passable, passable," said Tralee. "Got a pretty face, lovely brown eyes—don't you think so? Ah, but then these women are all alike—a sort of necessary evil."

"Bah! you'll wake from your lethargy one of these days, to find Cupid's arrow in your heart, and then you'll think one woman is an angel," Rives replied.

Next day Tralee and Rives were in the library together. Sutledge had gone to the station with the carriage, after the ladies. Tralee was sitting in the easy-chair with a copy of Shakespeare open before him, reading the "Taming of the Shrew," and Rives was writing letters to go by the afternoon mail.

"Fudge! man has his will, but woman has her way," said Tralee, closing the book and commencing to pace the room.

"Just so," answered Rives, without looking up from his writing.

"By George, they've arrived, Charlie," as the carriage drew up before the door. Tralee stood by the window looking through the shutters. "Not so bad, either."

"Eh?"

"Jove! what a pretty foot!"

"What's their complexion?" asked Rives, without moving.

"Blonde, golden hair and azure eyes, lips as red as blood-red wine. Both of 'em smiling. Know there's a couple of young gentlemen here, probably. Dreaming of a conquest already, perhaps."

Rives got up and went to the window.

"Very fair, Tralee. Worth our while, eh?"

"Yes—nothing else to do."

At dinner the gentlemen were introduced. Tralee was quite animated, for a wonder. He brought his small talk into requisition. Rives shone to the best of his ability. The ladies were agreeable. They felt thankful to Mr. Sutledge for inviting the gentlemen down just at that particular time, it is so handy to have an escort in the country.

"What do you do here?" asked Miss Polten, after dinner.

"Nothing," said Tralee.

"How swiftly time must fly," Miss Nicobar said, with a little silvery laugh.

Tralee thought she was laughing at him.

"O, we smoke, and read the morning paper.

We were going trouting one of these days," he drawled.

"But you can't smoke all the time," said Miss Nicobar.

"Yes, about."

"Perfectly horrid!" said Miss Polten.

Tralee thought he wasn't getting on very well. He went to the piano. "Will you not favor us with some music, Miss Polten?"

"And keep you from your cigars? I can't be so cruel as that," she answered, with provoking frankness.

He sat down to the instrument and rattled off a waltz.

"Sing us that little Scotch song you favored us with last evening, will you?" asked Mr. Sutledge. "Do, that's a dear!"

"Well," and Tralee began:

"'Twas on a simmer's afternoon,
A wee before the sun gade down,
My lassie wi' her braw new gown
Came o'er the hills to Gowrie.
The rosebud tinged wi' morning shower
Bloomed fresh within the sunnie bower,
But Kitty was the fairest flower
That ever bloomed in Gowrie."

Tralee finished the song, and then turned to Miss Polten: "Will you take my place at the instrument now?" he asked.

"Yes, as you have been so kind."

It was twelve o'clock that night before Tralee and Rives found themselves in the smoking-room.

"What do you think of them?" asked Rives.

"Better'n trout-fishing," answered Tralee, lighting a cigar, and throwing himself upon the sofa.

"Yes, I think we shall enjoy ourselves."

"Of course. But there's that inevitable sunrise-ride to-morrow morning. I knew we should have to take it. Farewell to morning dreams, except I dream with my eyes open," Tralee groaned.

At the same time the young ladies were "unfixing" their hair preparatory to sinking into the arms of Morpheus.

"Mr. Tralee has fine eyes," said Miss Polten, brushing her hair out, as she stood before the mirror.

"Yes, he sings well, too," Miss Nicobar remarked.

"Don't you think Mr. Rives is rather the most agreeable?"

"I don't know. Either will do for a flirtation."

"Yes. We can make them useful while we are here," Miss Polten said, laughing.

"I was pleased to see how miserable Mr. Tralee looked when we proposed that early ride."

"Yes, what a good husband he'd make. You know he wouldn't trouble you with too much devotion."

"No; he isn't my ideal. But I'm twenty-five—it's time something was done," said Miss Nicobar, with a half sigh.

"I suppose we must take up with a husband sometime."

"Yes; and if you can't get one you want, you must take what you can get."

"We might make something of them."

"I don't know. We'll wait and see what the raw material is that we've got to work upon, first."

Next day the flirtation was continued. A ride in the morning and another in the afternoon was just the regular thing. Tralee would have said a week before that his constitution would break down under such usage. But on the contrary I think his health improved. He didn't object to moonlight walks either. Sometimes he went with Miss Polten, and again with Miss Nicobar.

A week passed away. Mr. Tralee had taken to thinking seriously. He was more silent than usual when he smoked his cigar. When in the drawing-room he often found himself looking intently at Miss Nicobar. Sometimes he felt very much confused when she spoke to him. When her hand touched his it always thrilled him strangely. He couldn't understand it at first.

"It can't be possible," he thought, "that I am in love. No, that can't be. I've seen far more beautiful women than either Miss Nicobar or Miss Polten. But then, there's something rather bewitching about Miss Nicobar—sweet Minnie Nicobar! What expressive eyes she has! I always did fancy golden hair. Hum—I—"

Tralee twisted his moustache and looked very serious. "I believe I do like her very much. I think Rives does, too. We may be rivals. I believe I'll speak to him about this." And he got up and walked down into the garden below the house.

Rives was walking up and down the gravel path behind the hedge. He had been walking there for half an hour. One would say, to look at him, that he was trying to solve some very difficult problem. Tralee spied him and went around where he was.

"Ah, Tralee, glad to see you. I've something to say."

"Yes, and so have I," Tralee answered.

"Where are the ladies?"

"Taking a siesta, I believe. I wish to speak of them."

"And so do I."

Rives smiled. "Well, what?"

"They are very fine young ladies."

"Yes, certainly. I am aware of that," Rives answered, laughing.

"Well, but we couldn't do better," speaking earnestly.

"I suppose we must do it sometime," with a sigh.

"Yes. Which do you prefer?" Tralee asked.

"It's hard to choose. I think one of them is the woman I've been expecting. I think Miss Nicobar rather fancies me."

Tralee turned pale a little. "'Tis hard to choose." He didn't think so, but he was trying to blind Rives as to his real sentiments.

"Well, we can't both have the same one."

"No. And we should make ourselves understood before long. We ought to pair off."

"Yes, and the toss of a copper will decide it, I'm not very particular about it," and he drew a half eagle from his porte-monnaie. "Heads, and Miss Nicobar is yours, Tralee. Between two such beauties, 'tis hardly worth while to toss twice. Up she goes," and the coin flew upward. "Tails it is—you've lost!"

Tralee could not conceal his chagrin. "Was that fair?"

"Of course. Did you not agree to leave it to fate? Take a cigar, Tralee, we'll ride out with the ladies after tea."

For half an hour they walked the path in silence, and then returned to the house. Miss Polten and Minnie Nicobar were singing a duet when the gentlemen entered the parlor. Minnie turned away from the instrument when they came in.

"We shall ride out after tea, Minnie," Rives said, advancing toward her.

"No, thank you."

There was something in those expressive eyes that Rives did not like. "Are you unwell, Miss Nicobar?" he asked.

"Quite well, I thank you."

"Ah, indeed?"

"I've one little word of advice to give you, Mr. Rives," Miss Polten said, with a mischievous twinkle in her blue eyes, that Rives thought boded him no good.

"Well."

"When you toss a half eagle again for the choice of two ladies, be sure that the two ladies are not upon the other side of the hedge. Good afternoon, Mr. Rives. Adieu! Mr. Tralee!" And the ladies swept out of the room.

"By George! we're done, Tralee."

"Done brown, too. I'm off to Newport in the evening train. Sea air may do me good."

An hour later, two gentlemen took the cars at Thonetville Station. They looked crest-fallen, and one of them was heard to say—

"Confound that hedge!"

A HAND-TO-HAND CONFLICT.

BY BARBARA BROOME.

I DON'T believe you would have noticed it unless somebody pointed it out, though it stood in the heart of the city, and high brick walls hemmed it in and crowded against it. This old-fashioned wooden house, with the half-dead poplar before it, and the front yard filled with long, straggling grass, mixed in with dandelions.

The postman, albeit he could ill spare the time, paused a second with his hand on the gate. "Why didn't I ever see this before?" said he, with an air at once of discovery and astonishment. He gave a low whistle and then he beat his heels against the wide, low steps, waiting impatiently for his double rap to be answered.

At last, an undoing of bolts and bars, and a narrow strip of sunshine leaped through the cautious opening. The postman, a brisk, cheery chap, laughed at the apparition thus appearing. The odd little figure, with its wizened-up face and ancient mob cap; with its wrinkled hands like birds' claws, made up a jumble of fierceness and grotesqueness akin to a Meg Merrilies or the Witch of Endor. The unimpressible postman, however, as he took up his tune and hurried away, was troubled with no such romantic notions.

"All run to seed together, there, I reckon," was his thought, with a careless glance backward.

After rigidly excluding the faintest shadow of the aggressive sunshine; after performing many intricate manoeuvres; with a view to reconstruction—of bars and bolts—Miss Crowninshield, her list shoes awaking no echo, crossed the dark entry, and, like a wary black spider, dropped up the winding, spindle-legged stairs.

A gloomy place this!

The old house, in its dreary soundlessness, seems as though holding its breath with dread and fear. This is the way it has seemed for many a day—nay, many a year. This is the way the two old maid Crowninshields have lived for nobody knows how long.

If you could look into the room at the right, you would see the other sister, a counterpart of the first. She always sits just so, with her hands crossed in her lap, as stiff and motionless as the straight-backed chair that holds her.

You would like to solve the mystery of this isolation and desolation? It is natural, surely. But the secret, the crime and shame, if any there be, is fast locked in two hearts.

Like dragons have these forlorn ones guarded it, and its bitterness, forever rankling within them, has deadened them to everything, even to each other. They eat at the same table, and they sleep together in the same bed, and their eyes are as strangers. It is sad, this death in life. When the life immortal releases them we will sing jubilate. Come, let us go. This chill emptiness, this hopeless lethargy oppresses one. Hist! what is that? A bird trilling? Probably! There are a few that still visit the poplar outside. In very pity it must be.

"Plato! thou reasonest well." But can a bird laugh, and like that? Ye gods! there it goes again. What do you think now? Can it be some mischievous fay, swinging on the grass tops and rattling off the dew?

It did indeed sound strange, this peal of genuine, girlish laughter, that so suddenly overflowed the stirless house.

Shout after shout came pelting down, upon Miss Crowninshield, grimly mounting the stairs. For a moment she clung to the banister, then, involuntarily and against her will, the

shadow of a disused ghost of a smile broke over her and she went on.

Nearer and clearer, but Miss Crowninshield's dry "rat-tat-tat" exorcised the merry glee. It vanished, and all at once as it had come.

"Laura,"—Miss Crowninshield's speech was as lifeless as her looks—"here is a letter."

Somebody crossed the floor with a bound, and a bright voice, still all a-quiver, cried:

"A letter! At last, then, I shall hear the news."

A soft white hand fluttered through the door and clasped the packet. The speaker otherwise remained invisible. But the hand, the soft, dainty, wee, white rounded thing! That was simply irresistible.

Perhaps you didn't notice how prettily the fingers tapered down into their rosy nests of nails, nor what bewitching little dimples were playing hide and seek across the back, nor—Bref! My friend, that was a hand for a sculptor to model, for a painter to go distracted about, and above all, par excellence, was it a hand for a lover to kiss.

The old house slumbers on, the merry voice, the burst of laughter must have been a dream. There sit the two Miss Crowninshields, as silently taciturn, as rigid, as pulseless as ever. No wonder they have grown benumbed, with their strange life. Do you suppose they ever think over the bygone times, when they were young and liked the sunshine?

Across the shrouded mirror, even now, a figure flits. Just so *she* looked on that one night so long ago.

The gleaming silken petticoat, the flowing train, the stiff farthingale, the powder and patches are all there. The grand curtsey and the ogling of the huge fan are all familiar to them. They do not stir—they sit still and dream on.

But a touch galvanizes them. They both start to their feet, and draw themselves up with a look of horror.

"Laura Shirley," they cried, "how dared you!"

The child—she was nothing more—turned pale before them. She half knelt on a low stool.

"I did not know—I did not mean—surely—I have done no harm," she stammered.

"Girl!" cried Miss Crowninshield, sternly, "what we have buried with our hearts' blood, we will not have torn up."

And her sister, regarding the kneeling figure with a shudder, put out both her hands as if to push it from her.

"What have I done?" implored the frightened girl. "I found these things, this costume, in an old chest in my room. It was only through sport I came to put them on."

"Go!" said Miss Crowninshield, trembling with excitement, and pointing to the door. "This is an unseemly jest. Go and hide yourself from sight till it is forgotten."

"Will you not say first that you forgive me?"

But Miss Crowninshield relaxed not when the soft blue eyes upraised themselves to her imploringly. Perhaps the fear that she would exasperate her still further.

"I will never forgive this," she said, stonily.

"I do not care." Laura Shirley turned defiantly. "I will go away, and forever. You smother me here. It is like a tomb. And you are wicked, you two."

"Wicked!" The Miss Crowninshields were paralyzed.

"You sit waiting, waiting, waiting all the time, and that is wicked," with a stamp of her foot. "It is wicked to shut yourselves up so; it is wicked never to make friends; it is wicked, above all, not to love each other. I will go and sweep the streets before I will live here."

She turned her back saying this, her cheeks on fire. The long silken train rustled majestically out of the room. She was gone.

Miss Crowninshield opened the window and pushed wide the blind. The June air floated in with its breath of balm.

"Let us repent," said she, to her sister.

As they clasped hands, and the light and perfume from outside met over them, the sister said:

"We have been wicked."

Then, after a little pause:

"We must be grateful to Laura, for she has awakened us. Let us go and ask *her* to forgive us. Let us go and beg her to stay."

Laura was busy packing, but when she saw them coming hand in hand, she stopped in astonishment.

"Dear, try and forgive us," said Miss Crowninshield, humbly. "We acknowledge the error of our ways. We beg of you to stay with us, and complete your good work."

"You know," said Laura, with her arms thrown about them, "that it was mamma's wish."

"And for her sake, because she was the daughter of our sister Laura, will we love and cherish you," said they.

"Am I never to know about it," said Laura,

with a look of inquiry at the discarded costume.

"A laughing face wore that dress away years ago. A face radiant even as yours, but,"—the tone grew tremulous—"but the face that came back in it, a few short hours afterwards, was an *idiot's*. She was our youngest and dearest sister, and— I can tell you no more. No living person, besides us three, knows so much."

While Miss Crowninshield spoke, she folded carefully the silken robe; she passed her wrinkled hand tenderly over the tiny high-heeled shoes, then she brought all to Laura.

"Keep it," said she; "it belonged to one you never knew; why should you not wear it and take pleasure in its beauty? If you will do this, we will think you have entirely forgotten our harshness. Only not before us, dear. Do not let us see it."

The green curtain fell on the last act of *La Traviata*, and the orchestra dashed into a brilliant galop. Chester Lawrence, dubbed "the don" by his more intimate acquaintance, shrugged slightly his well-made shoulders.

"All a bore," he said, to his companion, in a voice that fully bore out his words.

His friend gave a good-natured laugh. He was used to "the don's" ways. He watched him with an amused air, as he wearily lifted his lorgnette, and slowly took the range of the house.

A brave sight in very truth was the crowded opera-house. The brilliant lights flashed out many a dazzling toilet, many a fair face. It was plain, though, that to "the don" there was nothing worth looking at. "That it was all a bore." The jewelled toy he languidly held drooped in his salmon-tinted kids.

"Life is such a dreadful mistake, Hal," he went on, with his elegant drawl; "eighteen hundred years of the same thing. Just think of it. Ah! my Lady Blank, with her four perennial daughters—faith, there's five now—do you see them? The little widow keeps well, does she not?—see her eyes shine. By my spurs, old Parks's doll of a wife is got up largely to-night. I'd give a guess at the cost of her *parure*, if it wasn't too much trouble. Besides, I think it's deucedly vulgar, this putting one's self out about anything. I wonder, Hal, if it's as slow a thing to the women—I fancy that curl-papers and shopping do a great deal for them—but we, poor devils, we—I judge by myself—are left entirely without the means of redemption. If there was only

something to keep the masculine mind from utter stagnation—from— Hal, look quick! there, a trifle to the right."

The last sentence was poured forth with a fire and rapidity totally foreign to the half soliloquy that had preceded it.

Hal, otherwise Harry Trevor, very much at your, or any body else's service, betraying no astonishment, though secretly intensely delighted, levelled his glass towards the required spot.

"What is't that alarms thee?" queried he, with a most tender modulation. "Is't Mr. Tubbs, in vast expanse of waistcoat and royal purple complex? Fearest thou, O delicate youth, an apoplectic denouement? Fie! for shame, he will outlive—"

"Don't be absurd! In that private box, do you see it?"

"The don" was certainly a chameleon. But a minute ago he was the very essence of insipidity—now he was full of life and animation.

"Eh, it's an it?" said rattle-pated Hal, taking another survey. "The private box? There sits Madam Storer, overflowing, as is her wont, with good nature and embonpoint, and, yes, methinks in the dim background I trace a second form. Can that be a hand, clutching the ruby velvet?"

"You see it at last, do you? Is it not perfect?" "The don" was enthusiastic in the extreme.

"Very—pretty—effect," said Harry, looking at it with the air of a connoisseur, and affecting the drawl "the don" had dropped.

"Don't be a jackass," was the impatient response. "I tell you you may hunt the world over and find nothing like it."

"Don, where are you going?" asked Harry, a bit surprised, as his companion rose hurriedly. Not receiving any answer, he waved his hand gracefully. "*Au revoir*, then, go and win; as for me, it's 'all a bore.'"

As Chester Lawrence strode away, not deluging him a look, he settled himself comfortably in his seat, shaking with suppressed laughter.

"'Gad, what a fellow he is," thought Hal. "He is better than a play. First he considers living as the very lockjaw of martyrdom, and then at sight of five wee fingers and a thumb he is all up, like an eccentric balloon. Not well balanced. Needs to be shaken before taken."

He directed his attention again towards the private box.

"Whew!" said he, "they are giving him

the slip. I fancied madam was looking uneasy."

When Chester Lawrence appeared at Mrs. Storer's box, that lady, leaning on her husband's arm, hooded and cloaked, was just making her exit. Mr. Storer also supported upon his other arm a second lady. It was towards her that the newly arrived directed his scrutiny. Her face he could not see. A fold of her hood was arranged so as completely to conceal it. But the *hand*! As it rested upon Mr. Storer's broadcloth the don could hardly resist pouncing upon it, then and there. Mrs. Storer expressed regrets, etc., etc. "Such a frightfully early hour, is it not?" cried she, piteously. "To think of having to give up the divine Patti; but it's on account of one of the horses—fallen lame—got to be bled—and in such a case, you know, ha, ha!—one's gratifications must be—ha, ha!—really—of course you know all about it—thank you, good-night." And Mr. Chester Lawrence, having tenaciously followed Mrs. Storer to her carriage, found himself standing bareheaded in the street.

"Zounds," he began, gnawing his under lip savagely. "Hal ridicules me and Mrs. Storer hoodwinks me. A most inexplicable state of affairs, and, strangely enough, I feel something tingling inside of me. Item. Do all men march to their fate with the same accompaniment? The little intrigue of madam,"—with a suave bow into the darkness—"renders it thrice enchanting. In perfect recklessness I throw down the gauntlet. Behold, the hand-to-hand conflict is commenced."

The good people of the Miss Crowninshields' vicinity, being hard workers and early risers, knew naught of the stopping of a carriage before the shabby wooden gate.

"Good-night," said Mrs. Storer, "my skillful manœuvring has put me in the very best of humors. The little risk we run was a pleasurable excitement."

Laura Shirley danced lightly into the house, and a stealthy form, in a brigand's hat, chalked the door—I am speaking figuratively—and strode away.

"I kind of like this," said Laura, pausing as she meditatively unlaced her boot. "This having to hide for fear of discovery by a cruel guardian, is not without its charms."

In the midst of brushing out her long, golden hair, she made a second pause; taking her chin cosily in her hands she thus discursively discoursed:

"*He* is worth looking at. Now if *he* were

only like *him*. Well, perhaps, *per-haps* I wouldn't have run away as I did. But the idea of telling me who I must marry! I guess I'll marry just who—I—*please*. And I wonder who I'd please. Let's see; tall? O yes, and black, jet black hair with a wave, black eyes, and of *course* a moustache, with a curve down. Why, that's just like *him*, and Mrs. Storer says *he* is so conceited. Heigho! how sleepy I am. I'll let it go so to-night, and alter it in the morning. Three months more before I can show my face. Three months before I am eighteen and free."

In the morning Laura did not alter her ideal of a husband. She probably would if she had had time.

In the morning Chester Lawrence, rallied unmercifully at the club-rooms, before an unbelieving public, by his treacherous friend, Harry Trevor, did a very foolish thing, of which, more anon.

In the morning Mrs. Storer eloped clandestinely with her husband on a business trip, and was cruel enough to stay a week.

At length, however, Laura and Mrs. Storer went shopping together. Laura was careless enough to drop her glove. A gentleman bowed politely and restored it. She felt an electric shock as her hand touched his; she had on a thick veil, but she recognized her—ideal. She leaned back in the carriage feeling pale.

"Never mind," said Mrs. Storer, by way of re-assurance. "He probably didn't know it was you."

Laura was not refreshed, even with this view of the case. She twiddled the glove in her fingers, and finally began to draw it pensively on, but it had suddenly grown a mile too large.

"What!" cried Mrs. Storer, eyeing it. "A pair of Jouvin's best? I did not believe he could have made such a sacrifice. After such a proof can you any longer deny that the man is a jackanapes?"

"I'm sure, ma'am," said Laura, as red as fire, "I never did deny it."

"But," said Mrs. Storer, shaking her forefinger playfully, "we are young and we are romantic, and we have a pair of bewitching hands that are betted on *fine mornings* down at the club, and we have many, many pretty thoughts, that we wrap up in silver paper, and try to stow away out of sight."

Laura was speechless and unbecomingly flushed and uncomfortable. What a griffin-eyed woman was this Mrs. Storer. Could she

ever have been her mamma's bosom friend? And what if her hands had been better on? It wasn't her fault; how could she help it? And could she never, without being thus fearfully dragged to light, think of—"

"That conceited creature," said Mrs. Storer, breaking in upon her reverie. "I haven't told you what he did this morning?"

Laura palpitated, but she would not so much as look as though she desired one crumb.

Mrs. Storer, happily, was thoroughly communicative.

"I had another call the"—running it up on her fingers—"the seventh, within five days, and I'd give my mosaics if I could only tell you what he said, word for word. You would have laughed for a week."

Laura was not so sure of that.

"However, you little chit, you abominable little coquette," ran on Mrs. Storer, "let it suffice you that you have had two offers before you were eighteen. Why, I was twenty-five to a day before I had even a beau."

Laura tried to speak, then she faltered and finally she burst into tears and hid her face.

"There, there, don't take on so," said Mrs. Storer, soothingly. "There's no harm done. I told him you were but a school-girl. That you liked to play with jumping-jacks and dolls, but a husband would be beyond your comprehension. I advised him to end all this by sending you a barrel of sugar-plums, which would be the most powerful plea for his forgiveness, which was all he might ever expect from you."

Laura still hid her face, but her sobs had ceased.

"I will not be insulted any longer," said she, in a strange, husky voice.

"That is right. I am glad you show proper spirit," cordially responded Mrs. Storer. "To be spied at and run after and betted upon by an insufferable coxcomb is enough to put any respectable girl to shame."

"I will end it at once," cried Laura, goaded to desperation.

"How?" asked Mrs. Storer, curiously. "If we could only devise some counterplot, and let him fall into his own trap. Why, the creature is so extremely enthusiastic that he has declared openly—what perfect absurdity—his willingness to marry you without even so much as a glimpse of your face beforehand."

"You are sure of it?"

Mrs. Storer nodded vigorously, and was about to ask Laura if she had the toothache,

her voice was so muffled, but Laura interposed with a second question:

"When is your masquerade?"

"In a fortnight."

"I have managed my plan, then, with the haughtiest of airs and looks."

"Queen Elizabeth!" cried Mrs. Storer, clapping her hands. "You look exactly like my picture of her, sentencing Essex."

But Laura neither smiled nor answered.

A bal en masque on the scale of Mrs. Storer's could not fail of success. Pig tailed Celestials and gentlemen from the reign of Henri Quatre; court ladies from the time of the first Louis up to Louis the XVI. inclusive, (exclusive though the ladies were); frisky friars, giggling nuns; fire, smoke, little Jacky Horner, and the sou' by sou'west wind (that is, persons representing these characters), effervesced in an intoxication of exhilaration.

A wild Kalmuck, who surveyed the kaleidoscopic phantasmagoria through an eye-glass screwed into his left optic organ, and skillfully held there by no apparent earthly aid whatever, said, in the picturesque accent of his country, "Chawming!"

The untutored savage's utterance is expressive. Further words were hyperbole.

Of times, however, there sits down with us to our gayest banquets a skeleton. Very many times the fairest rose is cankered at the centre.

So here, through this maze and whirl of festivity, stalked one unbending, incongruous guest.

Many a mocking laugh and merry sarcasm were launched at the tall, black domino, with the blood-red heart, who wandered incessantly to and fro—in the throng but not of it. Through his close black mask flashed two intensely dark eyes, piercing, sharp, watchful.

But the evening was nearly over, and the black domino's search, for such it evidently was, had been fruitless. He drew back impatiently into the shadow of a curtained doorway.

"I am burning with impatience," he muttered, clenching his hands, "but I am a fool to look any longer. It was but a jest. I was mad to believe in it."

"All is ready and waiting for you," whispered a voice in his ear.

As the black domino turned at the words, he confronted a figure closely masked like himself, who, throwing back his domino, pointed significantly to a white hand embroidered on the inside.

Without another word the two passed away together.

Through corridors lined with silk and cushioned with velvet, through suites of rooms fitted up with Eastern style and magnificence and ablaze with light; through the shadowy radiance of conservatories, where parti-colored lanterns, hidden like balls of fire among the leaves, showed out luminously, the tall, white lilies and the silvery flow of falling fountains.

The noise of the revellers, the crash of the music had ebbed away, wave after wave. A curtain was lifted, and the black domino followed his guide into an apartment hung with heavy, sombre-colored tapestry, and lit with a bluish lustre, that flung a strange soberness over the altar placed at the further end and the minister, in his clerical robes and stiff bands, standing beside it.

There were some gentlemen and ladies, in full masks, grouped near the altar. All wore dominoes that completely covered their dresses. All except one, and she wore a flowing brocaded skirt and train, a stiff farthingale and a gleaming petticoat, that just showed the silken high-heeled shoes. Her handsome arms were bare to the elbow. Towards her the black domino passed eagerly, and catching one hand firmly within his own, passionately kissed it.

He trembled, so doing, and the little cold white hand fluttered under his kiss, and flushed warm. But now a hush fell around, as the minister began the marriage service.

It was over! Like magic the minister and the wedding guests had departed, and Chester Lawrence found himself alone with the object of his bewildering, all-absorbing love. His love, that in a single night had sprung up like an armed man and conquered him.

At this supreme moment, while he still clasped her hand, the perfect thing he had risked all to gain, a thrill, a shiver, an undefinable something, passed over him. He gasped for breath and tore his mask from his face, and his faith came back.

"My own, my darling, my wife," he whispered, "have I not proved my love? Do you not feel instinctively that it will stand true forever?"

There was no answer, but the hand tried to slide from his grasp.

"Not so," he said tenderly, retaining it. "Do not fear. If any secret is to be hid from me, if I am not yet to fathom the mystery that envelops you, you will find me a patient waiter. But one thing I must have, one thing I will

not wait for. I must see you face to face."

Still not a word in answer, only a long-drawn sigh, soft and shivering.

"Is it," asked he, as if with a sudden thought, "that some accident has happened? To your face, I mean? Nothing like that could touch me. It must be true and good."

Her hand raised itself towards her face; he could restrain himself no longer.

"Woman," he cried, "you torture me!" for she was passive in his grasp, and her hand grew like ice against his. He thought she moaned slightly.

"This sudden passion," he murmured, desperately, "I cannot control. It is beyond my power. I will know the worst."

With these words, he untied the strings of the mask. How could he notice, that the bluish light in the tapestried room suddenly shone out, bluer and ghastlier?

"My God!" he cried, as the truth broke upon him, "can it be?"

He bent forward only to crouch back again, with a shudder.

O, this bitter, bitter awakening! He clutched at his face, and buried it deep in his throbbing hands, trying to shut out the horror. For one second, the thoughts chased themselves through his reeling brain. His love outraged, his pride spit upon, his recklessness—and even that he had refined in the end—so fearfully punished

"For life, for life," he groaned aloud. "Would to Heaven, I had not counterplotted to make the marriage real."

There was a heavy fall, and then a sharp click.

"Poor thing!" he said, springing forward with averted face. "She, at least, is not to blame." He raised her form from the floor. He had meant not to look at it again, but it lay so cold and heavy on his arm, that frightened, at he knew not what, he gave one hasty glance.

As if fascinated and under some spell, his eyes fastened and hung upon, nay hungrily devoured the fair pale face, that drooped against his shoulder. But it bewildered him. What did it mean? Was this a creation of his own unsettled fancy?

A look backward showed him the trick. There it lay. He could hardly see it so, without a shudder. The frightful staring face with its dead eyes. The hideous *idiot's* face, that for its brief reign had blocked out hope from his heart. Her fall had unloosed the spring. He understood it all now.

In his transport, Chester Lawrence forgot all but what he held in his arms. Under his fiery kiss, planted full upon her lips, Laura Shirley returned to consciousness.

She looked up wonderingly and put her hand to her face.

"O, I did not want to," she began, looking for her ghastly disguise; "but I promised and—" fuller thought dawned upon her—"but, I did not know that, I *did* not know that—"

"The marriage was to be a real one?" said Chester Lawrence, bending over her with radiant eyes.

"Mercy on us!" cried Mrs. Storer, making her appearance, in a perfectly apparent state of not-to-accounted-for perplexity. "What's all this?"

"Madam," said the gentleman, "my wife and I have no enemies to-night. Let us be friends." He offered his hand.

"Wife!" repeated Mrs. Storer, blankly, and looking to Laura for help.

"Yes ma'am," said the shameless creature, never flinching at her lover's encircling arm. "He says the minister was a real one. He managed it all."

"But you, you," stammered Mrs. Storer, still incredulous, "I didn't know you liked him. I'm sure, you said he was conceited."

"O no!" Laura was provoking in the extreme. "You said so. I only didn't say anything for fear you might think, because I was afraid you might say—"

"That you were in love, eh?" ended Mrs. Storer, brightening a little.

"It was natural to be bashful, you know," said Laura.

"You are bold enough now, however, you little deceitful hussy," cried Mrs. Storer, almost deciding to go into hysterics.

"O, but now there is all the difference in the world," said Laura, composedly flirting her fan. "We might as well make the best of what can't be helped."

Mrs. Storer decided against hysterics.

"Laura Shirley," said she, "you are only a child, no more fit to be married than a baby; but go home like a good girl, and Mr. Lawrence and I will talk it over. This is a strange ending to our practical joke."

Laura pouted.

"If I find this thing to be really so, I—for it is partly my fault—will try to help you out of your awkward position."

The two lovers smiled at each other.

"Yes," said Mrs. Storer, with a great effort,

"if you do really like him, and, he really likes you, and both of your hearts are set upon it, and this was a real marriage, the day you are eighteen, which will be in two months, you shall have another wedding from my house, and then everything will appear straight with the world."

"But those two months?" inquired Chester Lawrence.

"She must remain at the Miss Crowninshields'. You must not even see her."

"Impossible," cried the young man, "two whole, long infinitely-protracted months."

"Eight weeks," interposed Laura, sadly.

"Fifty-six wretched days," in a melancholic furor. "You might as well kill me at once. I cannot consent to it."

"Nonsense," fussed Mrs. Storer, "I see, I have two babies to deal with. I shall write to-morrow, to Laura's guardian."

Laura in an agony of supplication, threw herself before her.

"O, do not," she entreated, "we will promise, we meant to, we only wanted one little talk."

So that was settled, and the newly-made husband was permitted to conduct his baby of a wife to the carriage.

"You must forgive me," she said, "for you know it was very hard on me, to be laughed at all the time by Mrs. Storer, and to be betted on down at the club, and to be loving you all the time, and to be afraid that you were not in earnest."

"You must forgive me," he said, "for the fellows would make me bet, and that made me miserable. I loved you desperately, with no chance of getting to you, and Mrs. Storer's doublings made me wild."

"One thing I have decided upon, however. Never to wear this dress again," said Laura; "for if it had not been for this, I should never have thought of the idiot's face. But that is a secret."

"I wouldn't know it for the world, dear," answered her companion, gayly.

"Here is that hateful carriage."

"And an end to all our happiness."

"It is very hard!"

"Deuced hard," said Lawrence, with a catch in his breath, as he shut the door, and in a severely incensed voice commanded the driver who, as was his eminently proper and common custom, was half way round on his box, awaiting orders—to "drive on."

No sooner had coachee innocently turned to his horses than the strange young man

bawled, "Stop! Here!" he shouted, in an aggravatingly loud voice, thrusting his head and shoulders into the carriage. "Here is your——handkerchief."

A powerful imagination may possibly fill the long pause in the foregoing, with more satisfactory stuff than a daub of printer's ink.

A LADY'S GLOVE.

BY JAMES D. M'CABE, JR.

OFFICER HALE is a well-known man in the great city of New York. In all the detective force of that city, whose exploits have made them so famous, none bears a higher reputation for skill, sagacity and bravery, than he. But among all his many triumphs, there is one which is known to very few, and which I propose relating on these pages.

Late in October, 1865, Fifth Avenuedom was thrown into a buzz of excitement by the announcement of a marriage between Miss Golding the belle, and daughter of the great banker of that name, and a real, live French marquis—De Villiere by name. It was the first marriage of the season, and consequently every one was on tiptoe to receive an invitation to it, as every one felt sure that it would be a most brilliant affair. The happy pair were to leave for Europe on the first steamer after the wedding, and the marquis was to take his bride at once to his old chateau where his parents awaited them, and then she was to have the honor of being presented at court. At last, however, the momentous day arrived, and plain Miss Golding changed her name, and got a "handle" to her new one besides.

But, to the great annoyance of the bride and groom, the pleasant programme which they had laid down for themselves, was not to be carried out entire. Some decided changes were to be made in it by an adverse fate, and upon this hinges the story I am about to relate.

Such a brilliant marriage could not fail to call forth an unusually brilliant array of bridal gifts. The long table appointed for their reception literally groaned beneath the costly articles that were heaped upon it. Among the presents, was a set of magnificent diamonds—ear-rings and a necklace—which had been sent out from France by the parents of the marquis. They were admitted by all to be the most exquisite articles of jewelry ever seen in New York, and not a few of the fair ladies who admired them so enthusiastically, in their hearts violated the tenth commandment by coveting their neighbor's goods.

When the guests who had been invited the evening before the marriage, to witness the good fortune of the bride, had departed, the

room containing the presents was closed. Later in the evening the diamonds were wanted for some purpose, and Mamma Golding went after them, not being willing to trust a servant. To her astonishment and dismay, they were not in their accustomed place. The shriek with which she greeted this discovery brought the family into the room, and to their terrified questions she could only answer:

"The diamonds! the diamonds!"

A glance at the table at once revealed her meaning, and the house was immediately in an uproar. Search was made everywhere, but the missing jewels could not be discovered. Mamma Golding insisted that them arriage should be postponed on account of the loss, but neither of the lovers would listen to that. All they would agree to was that they should remain awhile in New York after that event, until an effort could be made to find the jewels. Mamma Golding was in favor of immediately arresting all the servants on the place, but the old banker, with his cool head and long experience of the world, knew better than this.

"No, no," he said, emphatically, "say nothing about the matter. Keep as quiet as possible. I'll send for Hale, the detective, and place the matter in his hands. He'll find the thief, if it can be done. Now leave the room all of you, and keep out of it till Hale comes."

The determined old man immediately enforced his orders, and then sent for Officer Hale, with a request to come to the house immediately, and by nine o'clock the official was seated in the banker's library, listening to all that could be told him.

"Do you suspect any one?" he asked, when Mr. Golding had concluded.

"No one," was the reply.

"But I do," broke in Mamma Golding, with energy. "I have learned that the last person seen in the room was Helen Brady, the house-girl—I suspect her."

"Very good," said Hale, quietly. "Now let me see the room, if you please. I wish to have no one with me but Mr. Golding."

The two men left the library and entered the room where the presents had been on exhibition. Every burner in the large chan-

deller was lit, so that the detective might see into the remotest parts of the apartment. Hale approached the table, and examined it closely. Suddenly an exclamation escaped his lips, and at the same time he took from the table a small and but little worn kid glove.

"Does this glove belong to any of your family?" he asked, turning to the banker.

"No," replied Mr. Golding, "I am sure it does not. It is too small for either my wife or my daughter. Some visitor probably left it there."

"Very likely," muttered Hale. "Might not some of your fashionable friends have been the thief in this case?" he asked, suddenly.

"My dear sir, you are dreaming," said Mr. Golding, blandly.

"Maybe so. Do me the favor to call your girl, Helen Brady, without telling her why she is wanted?"

Mr. Golding left the room, and in a few minutes returned, accompanied by Helen. She evinced no surprise or alarm as she entered.

"My girl," said Hale, as she came in, "are you aware that a robbery has been committed in this house?" He watched her closely as he spoke.

"Sure sir," she replied, in genuine astonishment, "an' I didn't hear of it."

"That will do," said Hale, "you can go out now."

Helen left the room, and Hale turned to Mr. Golding, who stood looking at him in blank amazement.

"You wrong that girl by suspecting her," he said. "I will stake my life on her innocence. I've had too much experience in the profession not to know a guilty face from an innocent one."

"Then who could have taken the jewels?"

"The owner of this glove," replied Hale. "I am sure of it. Depend upon it, Mr. Golding, if the thief is found, it will be among your fashionable friends."

"But, my dear sir," began the banker, in surprise.

"Excuse me for interrupting you," said Hale, "but I am sure of it. Now if you wish me to undertake this case, you must let me manage it in my own way. It bids fair to be very difficult, for this glove is the only thing I have to work upon. I shall not arrest Helen Brady, and I do not wish her to be molested. I will begin my search to-morrow.

In a few days I will declare it a hopeless undertaking, and appear to abandon it, but I will continue to work secretly. You must not tell this to any one. I would not take you into my confidence but for the fact that I shall have to draw on you for money. Upon these conditions I will go to work."

"I will be guided by you," said the banker; "but I cannot help thinking you are mistaken in the outset."

The next day the marriage took place. Hale stationed himself at the church door, and closely scanned the faces of all who passed in or out. He also made their hands objects of scrutiny. He discovered nothing, however, and went away feeling impatient and uncomfortable. That afternoon he set about finding out the history of the glove. It was a light kid, size number 5, and was scarcely soiled at all, except on the outer side of the middle finger, where it was plainly marked by the set of a ring which the owner had worn. The glove being the property of a fashionable lady, it occurred to Hale that it had been procured at Taylor's, and he decided to ascertain whether this was true or not.

Upon reaching the store he sought one of the proprietors, and showing him the glove, asked if he thought it came from there.

"I am confident of it," was the reply. "The glove is one of a new style which we imported about a month ago."

"Could you tell me to whom it was sold?"

"Impossible," said the merchant, laughing. "We had quite a large lot, and could not tell to whom we sold them."

Hale turned off with an exclamation of annoyance, and left the store. This was a bad beginning, and he had very little hope of making a better ending. Two days passed away, and the case was still as hopeless. On the third day he received, through the post-office, a note in a woman's handwriting. It was as follows:

"If officer Hale will meet the writer of this note at —'s saloon, room number 4, at eight o'clock to-morrow evening, he will learn something to his advantage."

What could this mean? For a moment he was inclined to believe it was some plot to injure him. Many things suggested themselves to him, which it is not necessary to mention here; and at last he determined to be at the rendezvous at the appointed time, prepared for any emergency, and to leave the result to be determined there.

Accordingly the next evening at eight o'clock he presented himself at ——'s saloon, a second-class house on Broadway, and asked to be shown to room number 4. The apartment was dimly lighted as he entered it, as the gas was now burning low. He immediately turned on more light, and saw sitting by a small table, a woman of medium height, closely veiled, and dressed with great plainness. It was impossible to see her face.

"I suppose, madam," said the detective, seating himself opposite her, "that you are the person who sent me a note requesting me to meet you here?"

"No," she replied, in a low, but singularly rich voice, "I am not the writer of that note, but am here in the place of that person."

"Then be pleased to state your business with me, for my time is precious."

"You are on the search for the person who took the diamonds of the Marquise de Villiere?" Hale bowed. "Well, then, Mr. Hale, I am authorized by parties that I may not name, to offer you five thousand dollars if you will abandon your efforts, and declare to your employers that you find the task a hopeless one. You will simply sign a paper which I have brought with me, pledging yourself to do this, and I will pay the money to you on the spot."

She held out a paper, which he took, and while pretending to read it he gazed searchingly at her left hand, which lay on the table. It was a very small white hand, evidently that of a lady, and on the fourth finger was a handsome diamond ring. Hale was satisfied that he was talking to the owner of the glove he had in his possession, and the person who had stolen the diamonds.

"I cannot accept your offer," he said, after a pause. "I must do my duty. If I were to be influenced by money, your offer would not be large enough. The stolen diamonds are worth one hundred thousand dollars, and Mr. Golding has promised me ten thousand for them if I recover them uninjured."

"I will make it twelve thousand," said the woman, eagerly.

"You will," said the detective, quietly. "I thought you were only acting for other parties."

The woman struck the table impatiently with her hand.

"They will fulfil any promise I may make," she said, "although I am only a servant."

"I must still refuse your offer," Hale said, coldly. "I am obliged to you for this inter-

view, however, as it has put me on the right track at last."

"That is said for effect," exclaimed the woman, sharply. "You know you think the case hopeless."

"I did until I came here to-night," replied Hale; "but I am convinced that you are the person that stole the jewels."

The woman burst into a laugh.

"I told you I was only a servant," she said.

"True," remarked the detective. "You contradict yourself, though. Look at your hand. It is too delicate and refined for a servant, and servants cannot wear such splendid diamonds as you have in that ring. You have placed yourself in my power, and I shall arrest you. I must see your face, madam."

He made a movement to tear away her veil, but she sprang towards him, and before he was aware of her intention, threw a handful of ground pepper in his eyes, completely blinding him for the time. In another instant she was gone, and he was suffering the most excruciating pain.

The next day Hale, who had recovered from the suffering caused by the pepper, determined to change his tactics. He was not slow in deciding upon a plan which he immediately proceeded to execute. That afternoon Mr. Golding received a call from a stranger, who was shown into the parlor. The banker took the card that was handed to him by his servant, and read aloud:

"Lord Anglesea, of England."

"I know him well," exclaimed the Marquis de Villiere, who chanced to be present at the time. "If you do not object, I will go down with you."

Together they entered the parlor. A gentleman, with black hair and a slight moustache, and elegantly dressed, rose to receive them.

"Anglesea, my dear fellow," exclaimed the marquis, advancing to him.

"Charmed to see you, my dear marquis," drawled the stranger, holding out his hand.

The marquis stopped abruptly, and looked at him in astonishment.

"Who are you, sir?" he exclaimed, sternly, "and by what right do you presume to present yourself here as Lord Anglesea?"

"Mr. Golding knows me very well," was the cool reply, "and can doubtless tell you the object of my visit."

"Never saw you before in my life," said the banker, in astonishment.

The stranger burst into a hearty laugh.

"So you don't know me? Well, if you don't, I'm safe from others," he said. "I have the honor to inform you that I am Edward Hale, of the detective police."

Mr. Golding stared at him in astonishment.

"Hale has light hair, and wears no beard or moustache," he said, incredulously.

The detective quietly removed the wig, and showed his own hair clipped close to make room for the disguise.

"The moustache works in the same way," he said, laughing.

"It is well done," exclaimed the marquis, admiringly. "But why should you adopt such an aristocratic disguise?"

"The reason is this, my lord," replied Hale. "It has become necessary for me to carry on my work among the fashionable circles of this city, and I must gain access to the very highest, without being suspected. I will stake my reputation that in two months' time I shall have found both the thief and the diamonds. I want your assistance. You must bring me out as your friend, Lord Anglesea, a name I selected at random, and gain me admission to Mrs. Varick's party to-night. After that I will work my own way."

"It's sheer folly, Hale," exclaimed Mr. Golding. "I can't conceive why you should cling to the idea that some person in good society has stolen the jewels. It's preposterous."

"Nevertheless, sir," replied Hale, "I have in the last two days discovered enough to convince me that I am right. All I ask is two months' time, and I promise to return the diamonds, and prove the correctness of my views."

"I think you are quite right," said the marquis; "and I will do my best to help you. But," he added, looking at Hale curiously, "do you think you are equal to the task of counterfeiting an English nobleman?"

"Perfectly competent, if you will give me a few hints as to Lord Anglesea's history, and such other things as may enable me to answer any questions that are asked me."

"That I will do with pleasure," said the marquis; "and if you are to make your *debut* to-night, we had better commence at once. *Ma foi*," he added, laughing. "I shall tell Anglesea of it when I see him in Paris next winter. It will be an excellent joke."

Mrs. Varick's party that night was a brilliant gathering of all the *elite* of the city, and there was a buzz of excitement through the parlors when the last distinguished arrival

was announced, and the Marquis de Villiere introduced to the hostess his very particular friend, Lord Anglesea. His lordship was received with marked cordiality, and was at once the lion of the evening.

Towards midnight the marquis felt some one touch him on the shoulder, and looking around, saw Lord Anglesea standing back of him.

"Well," he asked, eagerly, "what is it?"

"Nothing particular," was the reply. "I did not think to trouble you again, but I have taken a fancy to know a lady here, and want you to introduce me."

"Where is she?" asked the marquis. "You know I am at your service for this evening."

"There she stands, just by that window. Who is she?"

"She is a Mrs. Dakin, the wife of one of the millionaires of this city, as I am told. Her husband is too old for gayety, and rarely goes out; but she, being young and handsome, is a great ornament to society. If your lordship has no conscientious scruples," he added, with a mock bow, "you may have a fine field for a flirtation in that quarter. But, come! I will present you."

The lady in question was not over the medium height, but by far one of the most beautiful women in New York. There was nevertheless a strange and restless expression on her face, and she seemed nervous and uneasy. Her reception of Lord Anglesea was most gracious, and during the evening his lordship devoted himself to her with a persistency that created no little remark. During the next three weeks he was constantly at her house, and was her escort in numerous drives, at the opera, and at several parties. It was evident that he was getting on famously with Mrs. Dakin. Indeed the lady herself was conscious of a stronger feeling for the titled stranger than was consistent with her position as another man's wife; and his lordship found it very pleasant employment.

One morning he called on her, in accordance with an arrangement they had made, and found her seated on a luxurious sofa in the parlor. She gave him her hand languidly as he approached her, but without rising. He took it, and seated himself on the sofa by her, still retaining it. The color in her cheeks deepened as he did so, but she made no effort to withdraw her hand. For awhile neither spoke. At last his lordship, glancing at the hand which he held, and which was very small and delicate, uttered an excla-

mation of delight. The lady glanced at him in wonder.

"That is a very beautiful ring you wear," he said, immediately. "I never saw it before, I think."

"No," she replied, "I have not worn it for some time. It was a present from my husband on my last birthday."

His lordship was silent for sometime, and seemed to be plunged in thought. It would have required extraordinary courage in any other man to take the step which he was then contemplating. His companion was very beautiful, and he was well aware of the state of her feelings. At last, however, drawing a small and partially worn kid glove from his coat pocket, he held it up to her.

"Did you ever see this before?" he asked, smiling.

She turned ghastly pale, and bending forward, asked, hastily:

"Where did you get it?"

"I picked it up where you dropped it," he said, laughing. "But why do you seem so much surprised? Is it strange that I should treasure the glove of a beautiful woman?"

"No," she replied, more calmly. "But tell me where you found it."

He made no reply, but sat smiling, and gazing at her hand which he still held.

"Those are beautiful diamonds," he said, quietly. "Do you know I think they are almost as fine as those you stole from the Marquise de Villiere."

She would have sprung to her feet, but he held her down, and could feel her trembling violently.

"What do you mean by such insulting language?" she gasped.

"I mean that you stole the diamonds from the table in Mr. Golding's house," he said, sternly. "I found this glove there, where in your haste you had dropped it. More than this, you sought to throw me off the search by attempting to bribe me. You met me at —'s saloon, a few weeks ago, and succeeded in escaping me there, when I thought I had you in my power. When I met you at Mrs. Varick's party I recognized you by your voice, and to-day your acknowledgment of the glove, and this ring which you wore at our first interview, makes the identification complete."

"Who are you?" she faltered.

"Just now I was Lord Anglesea," he replied. "Now I am Edward Hale, of the detective police."

He felt her lean heavily against him, and upon looking at her found that she had fainted. She soon revived, however, and sat with her face buried in her hands.

"What do you mean to do with me?" she asked, in a low voice.

"I scarcely know," he replied. "One thing is certain, you must restore the diamonds."

"I will do so," she said, "and if you consent to let the matter drop here, and not to mention me as the guilty party, either to the Goldings or any one else, I will pay you the five thousand dollars I offered you to abandon the search."

"I have no disposition to be harsh with you, Mrs. Dakin," said Hale. "I do not want your money, and will readily give you my word of honor that your secret shall be preserved."

"I prefer that you should take the money," she said, coldly, raising her head with some of her former hauteur. "I do not wish to be under any obligations to you. Let it be a regular bargain between us."

"Be it so, then," replied the detective. "I owe you, perhaps, some amends for leading you into the intimate relations which have existed between us."

Her cheeks blazed, but she said nothing, and rose and left the room. In a few minutes she returned, and placed in his hands the diamonds and a package of money.

"You will keep your word?" she said, without looking at him.

"You may trust me," he answered. "Perhaps I am not doing my duty, but God forbid that I should be hard with you."

She hesitated a moment, then held out her hand to him, and Hale felt it tremble as he took it. In an instant, she withdrew it, and passed out of the room.

Hale hastened to the office of Mr. Golding, and upon sending in his card, was at once admitted to the banker's private room.

"I have called to ask you a question," he said, as he returned the old gentleman's greeting. "If I can restore the jewels your daughter has lost, will you be content to receive them without asking me how I found them? and will you consent to refrain from prosecuting the guilty party? You will do a real kindness to one whom you little suspect, if you will."

"All I have desired throughout the whole affair," replied the banker, "has been to recover the jewels. Let me have them, and I promise you the matter shall drop."

"Then here they are," said the detective, quietly, laying them on the desk before the astonished banker. "And now," he continued, "I must resume my own character. Before I do so, however, I will say, Mr. Golding, that in my suspicions I was right. The owner of the glove that I found on your table was the thief."

Mr. Golding paid the ten thousand dollars promised the detective, and the latter left the office. Since then the banker has had serious doubts of the honesty of every one of those

who were present at his house on the day when the diamonds were stolen.

Mrs. Dakin and her husband left New York for Europe a few weeks later, and are still there. The Marquise de Villiere met her at the house of the American minister, and was delighted to find an old friend there. She failed, however, to notice the deathly pallor that overspread the features of her friend, as that lady's eyes rested upon the diamonds which sparkled so gloriously in the light of the chandelier.